

Andrews University

Digital Commons @ Andrews University

Professional Dissertations DMin

Graduate Research

2023

Creating a Mission-Focused Stewardship Plan for the Shiloh Bilingual French Seventh-day Adventist Church in Brooklyn, New York

Herode J. Thomas
Andrews University

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.andrews.edu/dmin>



Part of the [Practical Theology Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Thomas, Herode J., "Creating a Mission-Focused Stewardship Plan for the Shiloh Bilingual French Seventh-day Adventist Church in Brooklyn, New York" (2023). *Professional Dissertations DMin*. 777.

<https://digitalcommons.andrews.edu/dmin/777>

This Dissertation is brought to you for free and open access by the Graduate Research at Digital Commons @ Andrews University. It has been accepted for inclusion in Professional Dissertations DMin by an authorized administrator of Digital Commons @ Andrews University. For more information, please contact repository@andrews.edu.

ABSTRACT

CREATING A MISSION-FOCUSED STEWARDSHIP
PLAN FOR THE SHILOH BILINGUAL FRENCH
SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST CHURCH
IN BROOKLYN, NEW YORK

by

Herode J. Thomas

Adviser: Alanzo Smith

ABSTRACT OF GRADUATE STUDENT RESEARCH

Professional Dissertation

Andrews University

Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary

Title: CREATING A MISSION-FOCUSED STEWARDSHIP PLAN FOR THE
SHILOH BILINGUAL FRENCH SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST
CHURCH IN BROOKLYN, NEW YORK

Name of researcher: Herode J. Thomas

Name and degree of faculty adviser: Alanzo Smith, PhD

Date completed: February 2023

Problem

A review of administrative data reveals that Shiloh French Seventh-day Adventist Church has lost 25% of its members over the past 5 years, while only 15% joined by baptism. Most new members come from transfers and profession of faith. The purpose of the present work is to address the issue of lack of motivation to carry out the mission of the worldwide church by asking the following question: How can a mission-focused stewardship plan help church leaders and members refocus?

Methodology

Based on the context, theological reflection, and literature review, the initiative was presented in four phases: Mission-Focused Stewardship Sounding Board, Mission-Focused Stewardship Mindfulness Movement, Conducting Mission-Focused Stewardship Seminars, and Mission-Focused Stewardship Peer Support Groups/Mentoring. The implementation of those phases was done as follows.

Forming a sounding board was the first phase to implement the project. A diverse group of 8 people was appointed—men, women, young adults, and senior people—to help me design, implement, and evaluate the project. The sounding board met to prepare a working plan with goals that related to specific attainments or understandings or to differing qualities of experience, and they typically involved two dimensions: challenge and commitment, which will be explained more in chapter 4. To have a better picture of what they were doing, the sounding board was exposed to few mission-focused stewardship practitioners so that they could assist better in the implementation of the project. Here are some topics that were developed in this series: servant leadership, how to pray effectively, the mission of the church, Natural Church Development (NCD), seeing Shiloh in context, theological foundation of mission-focused stewardship, ministering during a pandemic, reforming the spirituality of the church, church business, dynamics of congregational life, ongoing coaching, member retention, Maxlife (events dedicated to providing high quality seminars that add value to people's lives), culture identity of the church, and church growth.

The leaders involved in this project were very responsive and considered the process very meaningful to the health of the church and their personal spiritual growth.

Fifty percent of the sounding board stated that NCD was new to them and so it was a blessing that they were a part of the project. After all the seminars were well presented, the sounding board was excited and eager to serve. Fliers were posted on social media and church bulletin boards to invite not only the sounding board, but also all the leaders of Shiloh Bilingual to participate. Phase two was about the mission-focused stewardship awareness movement. Through the questionnaire and interviews, they were able to measure their attitudes. Mission-focused stewardship or mindfulness movement is a strategy and a wake-up call to do mission. One hundred percent of the participants deemed the questions relevant. They believed that the questions revealed their weaknesses.

Phase three was about conducting seminars. The same seminars mentioned above were presented to all the participants—leaders and members alike. Eighty-five percent of the participants testified that they gained valuable skills and knowledge from the seminars. Phase four was about small groups. The church was divided into five small groups. There were different age groups, as well as programs implemented for them. One hundred percent of the small group members agreed that the small group gave them the opportunity to feel accepted and open up.

Results

Every group was represented by a color. Group one was dark blue, group two was orange, group three was grey, group four was yellow, and group five was light blue. At all the tables, everyone noted that they believed in stewardship. The disparity arose when we came to the topic of gross pay and net pay. For the category entitled “systematically,” the numbers varied from very low in group 5 to very high in group 4.

The groups had many similarities such as having more females than males and believing in stewardship. In all the groups, individuals paid tithe from the net rather than the gross. There were 33 females in the study and 17 males. All the participants in the study believed in the practice of stewardship. Sixteen of the 50 participants believed that tithe should be paid from the gross, while 37 out of 50 individuals paid tithe from the net. Four individuals out of 50 did not pay tithe systemically. After the implementation of the project, 85% of the participants were excited and expressed the fact that they were motivated to do ministry. The feedback was well received at a business meeting.

To get a better result, I had to address the stewardship problems in a spirit of positive confrontation. I had to challenge the status quo to bring change and to use the resources that I had at my disposal. I had to bring innovation that could mobilize, motivate, and establish clear direction and vision. To be a transformational leader, one must advocate and orchestrate bold moves.

Conclusion

The report was exciting because there was so much learning involved and the participants were very enthusiastic about the project. Overall, it was a wonderful experience. It was also challenging because the journey was long, data collection was time consuming, the rubric for research had to be respected, and Covid changed the dynamics of the project. One-on-one conversation is essential. Much of the time, the real picture cannot be seen in a large group, but when you talk to individuals one-on-one, the vision is comprehended. A pastor's work is successful with visitation. Without visitation, there is no personal contact. The best way to build a relationship and trust is through one-

on-one conversations. The individual starts to feel comfortable and treats you like a member of the family.

From the study we concluded that more people need to be educated on stewardship—both philosophy and practice. Stewardship has become a subject which is not welcomed. A lot of people do not want to talk or hear about stewardship. Once they hear the word *stewardship*, they think “money,” and in this society, there is never enough money. Some individuals have more than one job and work all types of shifts, yet there is still not enough money. This is where we educate about faith and the reason for our existence on this earth. They must know that they are travelers on this earth with a mission, and everything we do on this earth is for the greater goal of reaching the Promised Land. The only way to achieve this is to put God first in all that we do.

Andrews University
Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary

CREATING A MISSION-FOCUSED STEWARDSHIP
PLAN FOR THE SHILOH BILINGUAL FRENCH
SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST CHURCH
IN BROOKLYN, NEW YORK

A Professional Dissertation
Presented in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Ministry

by
Herode J. Thomas
February 2023

© Copyright by Herode J. Thomas 2023
All Rights Reserved

CREATING A MISSION-FOCUSED STEWARDSHIP
PLAN FOR THE SHILOH BILINGUAL FRENCH
SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST CHURCH
IN BROOKLYN, NEW YORK

A Professional Dissertation
presented in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree
Doctor of Ministry

by

Herode J. Thomas

APPROVAL BY THE COMMITTEE:

Adviser,
Alanzo Smith

Director of DMin Program
Hyveth Williams

Reginald Barthelemy

Dean, SDA Theological Seminary
Jiří Moskala

Joseph Kidder

Date approved

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF FIGURES	vi
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS	vii
Chapter	
1. INTRODUCTION	1
Description of the Ministry Context	1
Statement of the Problem.....	2
Statement of the Task.....	3
Delimitations.....	3
Description of the Project Process	3
Definition of Terms.....	5
2. THEOLOGICAL REFLECTION	7
Introduction.....	7
Genesis Perspective on Mission-Focused Stewardship	8
Mission Focus from a Selected Patriarchal Perspective	8
The Levitical System Perspective.....	10
Mission-Focused Stewardship from a Psalmist’s Perspective.....	11
Mission-Focused Stewardship from a Selected Prophetical Perspective ..	12
New Testament Church Response to Mission-Focused Stewardship.....	14
Jesus and Money	15
The Gift-Based Ministry	16
The Early Church.....	17
A Survey of Selected Church Fathers on Mission Focus	19
Mission-Focused Stewardship	25
Ellen White’s Views: Time, Talent, Treasure	25
Contemporary Views	27
Summary	30
3. LITERATURE SUPPORTING MISSION-FOCUSED STEWARDSHIP PLAN FOR THE SHILOH BILINGUAL FRENCH SDA CHURCH IN BROOKLYN, NEW YORK.....	32
Introduction.....	32
Mission Focus	33

A Brief Examination of the Seventh-day Adventist Organization	
Heritage on Mission.....	36
From 1840 to 1970.....	36
From 1985 to 2016.....	37
A Brief Look into the Historical Understanding within the SDA	
Organization.....	38
Local Church.....	39
Conference	41
Union.....	41
Division.....	41
General Conference	42
Christian Stewardship	43
Tithe and Offering.....	46
Philosophy and Lifestyle Considerations.....	46
Theory of Motivation	47
Mission-Focused Stewardship and Small Groups	50
Correlation between Mission and Theory of Motivation.....	52
Correlation between Stewardship and Mission.....	52
Summary	53
4. DESCRIPTION OF THE INITIATIVE	55
Introduction.....	55
Overall Objective	56
Background and Rationale	56
Description of the Initiative	58
Phase One: Mission-Focused Stewardship Sounding Board	58
Phase Two: Mission-Focused Stewardship Awareness Movement.....	60
Phase Three: Conducting Mission-Focused Stewardship Seminars.....	61
Phase Four: Mission-Focused Stewardship Peer Support Groups/ Mentoring.....	63
Research Design.....	65
Methodology	65
Sampling Method.....	66
Measurement and Validity	66
Detailed Study Procedures.....	67
Results.....	68
Summary	68
5. RESULTS FROM IMPLEMENTING THE MISSION FOCUS STEWARDSHIP PLAN.....	72
Introduction.....	72
Mission-Focused Stewardship Mindfulness Movement.....	73
Results.....	73
Empowering Leadership	74

Holistic Small Groups.....	75
Loving Relationships	75
Identify Resources (and Partners).....	75
Conducting Mission-Focused Stewardship Seminars.....	76
Leaders' Presentations	76
Participants' Responses	77
Mission-Focused-Stewardship Peer Support Groups/Mentoring	78
Statistical Goals and Procedures	78
Objectives and Statistics for Groups.....	81
Participants' Responses	86
Evaluation/Overall Impression	87
Summary	87
My Personal Impression	88
 6. CONCLUSION.....	 90
Method of Evaluation	90
Observations on Learning.....	90
Recommendations.....	92
 Appendix	
A. SURVEY ON CHRISTIAN STEWARDSHIP	95
B. LETTER OF INFORMED CONSENT	98
 REFERENCE LIST	 101
 CURRICULUM VITA	 109

LIST OF FIGURES

1. Natural Church Development Profile	74
2. Analysis of Small Group Attendees.....	79
3. Goal Achievements.....	80
4. Age Grouping of Peer Group One	82
5. Age Grouping of Peer Group Two.....	83
6. Age Grouping of Peer Group Three.....	83
7. Age Grouping of Peer Group Four	84
8. Age Grouping of Peer Group Five.....	85
9. A Comparison of the Five Groups.....	86

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

When I think of saying “Thank you” after a hard job, I do not know where to start because so many people have helped me accomplish this thesis. As I was browsing the internet, my eyes fell on a photo. The picture was of a boy with a heavy book bag on his back and he was on a ladder. The photo really grabbed my attention. When I looked carefully, I noticed the steps of the ladder were different arms of the various teachers and educators he had had. One of the arms helped form the ladder, while the other hand held something that symbolized the subject they taught. For example, the gym teacher had a soccer ball and whistle, and world history teacher was holding a globe. This picture is so significant. It shows that from bottom to top, all these teachers had an influence in helping the boy reach the top. He would not have been able to reach it by himself. They helped me look at this thesis in another light. here were several arms that helped me reach the finish line. Some people prayed; others gave advice, mentorship, and encouragement. If I had to thank the individuals who have helped me from my birth until now, this paper would never end. However, I first want to mention my God and Creator. I thank God for everyone who took part in helping me. Thank you, my Lord and God, for my breath. I am living only because of you. Blessed be your name forever and ever!

Thank you is not enough for my beautiful, intelligent wife, for her love and support. She has always been there to support me and give advice. She worked hard when the children fell asleep. She pushed me to accomplish my goals. I thank my three

children, Phoebe, Goel, and Khahyil. When I felt discouraged, playing “David and Goliath” encouraged me. I thank my dad, Jean-Vilien, for introducing me to the gospel and giving me a love for ministry. I thank my older brother, Rameau, for encouraging me to pursue higher education when I came to the United States. I thank my brothers, Gary, Villard, and Techener, and the princess of the family, Lunece, and their families. I thank my aunt and godmother, Tertulia. Thank you for taking care of my children and my home. You were always there when I needed you. You are a blessing, Dr. Ricardo Bain, my first advisor. Thanks for pouring into my life. I appreciate all your efforts to finish this race with me. Thank you, Dr. Alanzo Smith, my first reader, for always being there and seeing the potential in me. Thank you, Dr. Rosario, for agreeing to finish the race with me. We share the same passion for church growth. Thank you, Greater New York, for allowing me to attend school and for encouraging Franco-Haitian ministries the way you do.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Since I was a little boy, I heard stewardship being discussed. I was born and raised in the church. The topic of stewardship has always intrigued me. My first impression of stewardship was that it was all about money because it is always associated with money. While growing up, doing research, and reading Ellen White's writings, I realized the depth of stewardship (Verdejo, 2021). This discovery awakened my curiosity, and I began to dig deeper into stewardship. When I became a pastor, I realized the need for our members to be more educated and knowledgeable about stewardship. This has given me the impetus to conduct this study. One of the outcomes of this study is that it allowed me to pursue my long-time dream to become a stewardship specialist. This project can be an educational tool for the reader and member (Verdejo, 2021). Reading this study can encourage people to be sacrificial and missional so that the church of God can move forward with its mission of winning souls.

Description of the Ministry Context

Based on church records, Shiloh Bilingual French is comprised of adults, 59.2%; youth, 15.2%; senior citizens, 3.2%; and children, 22.4%. On average, there are 59 people who attend church each Sabbath (Reddy, 2019). At Shiloh Bilingual French Seventh-day Adventist Church, we have many obstacles that prevent us from evangelism:

members have half-hearted faith; they work 20 hours, six days a week, leaving no room for evangelism. Social media has replaced the focal point of evangelism and has unsocialized members. Many members do not attend church in person because they have the option of viewing online.

In a general context, a decrease in spirituality can be observed globally. Reddy (2019) noted that several individuals have lost their passion for evangelization, particularly in the world's poorest nations where working seems to take first place (Reddy, 2019). It is not only the poor, but rich nations, industrialized nations, developed and under-developed nations. People appear to be perpetually exhausted, overworked, and only ready to attend service on Sabbath mornings (Reddy, 2019). Some members neglect the basic principle of tithes and offerings, which is one of the main support elements of the mission.

To regain our passion, we must understand our heritage, understanding where we came from and what will help us reach where we intend to go (Verdejo, 2021). Mission-focused stewardship can play a significant role in helping church leaders and members refocus (Baqai, 2018). About 25% of the members are involved in ministry.

Statement of the Problem

A review of administrative data reveals that Shiloh French Seventh-day Adventist Church has lost 25% of its members over the past five years, while only 15% joined by baptism. Most new members come from transfers and profession of faith. There are 18 million Seventh-day Adventists worldwide (Naledi, 2022). However, authorities recently disclosed that the church had lost one in three members during the last 50 years. The first Summit on Nurturing and Retention of the Adventist Church revealed research showing

that for every 100 new members the church acquires, it loses 43 former ones (Naledi, 2022). Personal issues such as high level of conflict, personal conflict, family conflict, prolonged doubts, and dislike are some aspects of church life, and these experiences are the primary cause of the low retention rate. Members do not leave the church or its principles due to emotional difficulties like divorce or unemployment (Naledi, 2022). The present work aims to address the lack of motivation to carry out the mission of the worldwide church by asking the following question: How can a mission-focused stewardship plan help church leaders and members refocus?

Statement of the Task

The task of this project is to develop a Christian stewardship program to help church members understand and get involved in the well-being of the church holistically, to instil in everyone a passion for the great mission, to establish a leadership program that will lead to the spiritual growth of the church, and finally, to develop a comprehensive plan that will help churches with a mission-focused stewardship agenda.

Delimitations

The project will be delimited to the Shiloh Bilingual French Seventh-day Adventist church in Brooklyn, NY. I conducted two different surveys in one study: The first was a SurveyMonkey which involved 5 small groups. The second was the NCD survey. The study was conducted over six months. Everything was localized to the Brooklyn Canarsie area where Shiloh is located.

Description of the Project Process

A theological reflection on mission-focused stewardship was developed. This

section has different themes that will be developed. Some of the themes are Genesis' perspective on mission-focused stewardship, mission focus from a selected patriarchal perspective, the Levitical system perspective, mission-focused stewardship from a Psalmist's perspective, mission-focused stewardship from a selected prophetic perspective, New Testament church response to mission-focused stewardship, a survey of selected church fathers on mission focus, and Ellen White's views about mission-focused stewardship. A synopsis of each theme listed above will be given.

A scholarly literature review on Christian stewardship and mission will be presented. In this section, I will develop mission, a brief examination of the SDA organization heritage on mission, a brief look into the historical understanding within the SDA organization, Christian stewardship, applying Maslow's (1954; McLeod, 2022) needs to ecclesiastical management, the correlation between mission and theory of motivation, and the correlation between stewardship and mission.

Based on the context, the theological reflection, and the literature review, the initiative will be presented in four phases as follows: Phase one is about the mission-focused stewardship sounding board; Phase two is about the mission-focused stewardship awareness movement; the third phase is about conducting mission-focused stewardship seminars; and the fourth phase deals with mission-focused stewardship peer support groups/mentoring.

The purpose of this section is to present the narrative of the result of the project. I had the privilege of working with the church members and leaders to accomplish that task. It was a remarkably interesting experience. The members had the opportunity of participating and providing feedback. I had the opportunity of forming five small groups

and we worked together for 25 weeks. They shared their experiences, and we gave them a survey. Later on in the chapter, we will share the results of that survey. Each activity (as mentioned in this chapter), was announced three weeks in advance and the information was put in the church bulletin. A flyer was also designed and posted on various platforms. We sent out a mass text to members as a reminder. Church members collaborated and invited family members and friends. The attendance for each seminar was 40 to 50 members.

The method of evaluation, observations on learning, and recommendations will be presented in the conclusion.

Definition of Terms

Mission Focus: a mindset based on evangelism where each disciple can go forward and make more disciples.

Christian Stewardship: the lifestyle of one who accepts Christ's lordship, walks in partnership with God, and acts as His agent to manage His affairs on earth (Maxson & Lézeau, 2006). Such a person is passionate about supporting the ministry and recognizes that God will use his/her money, time, talents, and intelligence to fulfil His will (Verdejo, 2021).

Stewardship Plan: a designed platform where both information and empowerment are accessible to each participant. This plan is to guide church leaders by suggesting different ways to follow through to their expected accomplishment and beyond. It can also be viewed as a solid foundation to transfer the knowledge accumulated to others. If individuals can understand mission-focused stewardship, they will begin to incorporate the ideas in their strategies to further the mission effectively.

Small Group: a group (from 3 to 12 people) where exchanges take place face-to-face; each person can communicate with others without going through an intermediary. Small groups also reflect the benefits of in-depth, genuine community as members live life together in a close-knit group.

Sounding Board: a diverse group of people, including men, women, young adults, and senior people who help design, implement, and evaluate a project. The work of the sounding board in this project is to provide a model of a mission-focused stewardship plan.

Mindfulness Movement: this is put in place for the growth of the church, which embodies self-awareness. The more conscious we are of ourselves, the more productive we become at the tasks at hand. It is to sensitize one's conscience to understand the nature of a God who is committed to His mission. God has provided a participative method based on His character whereby He implores His people to be missional and sacrificial.

CHAPTER 2

THEOLOGICAL REFLECTION

Introduction

The following section is a theological reflection regarding mission-focused stewardship. The underlying objective of this chapter is to sensitize one's conscience to the understanding of the nature of God that is committed to mission. Based on His character, God imposes a participative method whereby He implores His people to be missional and sacrificial. His character was initially revealed when He sought Adam and Eve after they fell into temptation in the Garden of Eden. His commitment to find Adam and Eve, in addition to clothing them, illustrates that regardless of the conditions in which people find themselves, God always reaches out to them (Gen 3:8). Despite the fractured relationship between God and humankind, He still seeks to save the lost, the least, and the last. That voice still calls. Every time I feel like I have the Jonah syndrome, the voice keeps on reframing and redirecting me to ministry.

This chapter has different themes that will be developed. Some of the themes are the Genesis perspective on mission-focused stewardship, mission focus from a selected patriarchal perspective, the Levitical system perspective, mission-focused stewardship from a Psalmist's perspective, mission-focused stewardship from a selected prophetic perspective, a New Testament church response to mission-focused stewardship, a survey of selected church fathers on mission focus, and Ellen White's views about mission-

focused stewardship. A synopsis of each theme listed above will be given.

Genesis Perspective on Mission-Focused Stewardship

Mission focus is a mindset based on evangelism where each disciple can go forward and make more disciples. Stewardship refers to the lifestyle of those who accept Christ as their personal Savior because they fit Christ into every detail of their lives. Such people are passionate about supporting ministry and recognize that God will use their money, time, talents, and intelligence to fulfill His will. It is important to note that God's interest rests with the commitment to extend aid to one another and reach out to one another. In the stewardship of salvation, God gave His only Son and used individuals to announce the plan of salvation. People cannot save people, but the plan of salvation is like "one beggar showing another beggar where to find bread" (Garrison, 2013).

God created people to live in community and to be accountable for one another. Another example is the interaction between God and Cain when He asked him to explain the whereabouts of Abel (Gen 4:9). With this encounter, God illustrated that we should care for our neighbors and nurture one another. Unlike seeking out for one another, it has also been apparent that sometimes we are guilty of the departure of our brothers and sisters from the ministries. Furthermore, we may have knowingly or unknowingly contributed to the spiritual demise of our contemporaries as opposed to helping them out of their vicissitudes. The account provides the insight that we should know about the welfare of our fellowmen and be their keeper.

Mission Focus from a Selected Patriarchal Perspective

In this section, I have presented how selected patriarchs responded to mission:

Noah, Abraham, and Moses. Noah responded positively to God's call. It should not escape our attention that Noah's commitment to mission came at a time when society was dominated by the corruption that pervaded the time. He preached for 120 years, investing his time, talent, skills, commitment, and resources to reach out to those who had departed from God's ways. As he preached in public and built the ark, Noah was passionate about their salvation. Noah was all in with God and that is why he did everything just as God commanded (Gen 6:22). The records indicate a small harvest that was limited to only his family, but it was the fulfillment of a divine promise "that the word will not return void."

Another illustration can be drawn from Abram's departure from Ur to Canaan where he was supposed to establish a new nation. Despite the lack of a clear designation of the location to which God had assigned him, Abram obediently responded to God's calling like a faithful missionary (Gen 12:1-9) . He even reiterated his commitment to uphold God's will when he agreed to sacrifice his only son at God's request. Abram's firm commitment to God earned him the reputation of being the father of nations. This move by Abram has previously been perceived to be distinct from every other thing that has transpired before the inception of modernism (Cahill, 2010).

Abraham's call to commitment involved leaving Ur, a civilized city in Sumeria, for a strange land with diminished civilization. This implied that he had to abandon all the possessions that he had acquired in Ur. This included leaving his comfortable way of life and his friends to pursue a new beginning according to God's will. The commencement of his mission, with this nature of commitment, reminds me of Christ's teaching about following Him. Jesus Christ taught that all those who wanted to follow Him must be ready to sacrifice popularity and take up their cross and follow Him (Luke

9:23). Premised on the background teaching of the requirement that we commit to account for our brothers, the nature of the calling to mission has always involved being sent out to seek and to save “our fellowmen” those who are lost.

During their slavery in Egypt, Pharaoh became very oppressive to the Israelites. Thus, Moses was committed to a special mission, pursuant to God’s calling, to free the children of God from bondage. His mission bore four unique elements: political, economic, social, and spiritual. Regarding the political element, Moses’ mission was to confront Pharaoh to allow the Israelites to become as autonomous as other nations on the planet. As such, Moses pleaded with him to allow the people of God to appoint their preferred leaders, enact their laws, and remain independent like all other nations. The economic element of the mission’s underlying prospect was for the Israelites to have the freedom to benefit from the work of their hands while developing their economic structure, as opposed to the conventional working towards developing the economic situation in Egypt. Regarding the social aspect of the mission, Moses’ prospect was to promote interaction among the people of Israel to the extent that allowed them to be conscious of their human dignity. This is premised on their historical perception that slaves were treated differently due to their racial differences. The spiritual element of the mission demanded that Moses had to set the Israelites free so that they could go and worship God (Exod 9:1).

The Levitical System Perspective

This system was established to support those who carry out the gospel mission across the planet. The first establishment of the Levitical system was for the purpose of demonstrating gratefulness to God for having freed the Israelites from Egypt. The people

undertook to present to God the first harvest of their land while worshipping Him (Deut 26:6–10). Sacrifices were offered in appreciation of God’s goodness. In addition, the sacrificial system had also established a critical support system for the construction of the tabernacle (Exod 34:4), this being the only mode of representing God on earth (Robbins, 1990).

In exchange for their services, God established that the tithe of the Israelites would serve as payment for the Levitical priests. This was against the background that the priests and the Levites should not have a portion and an inheritance among Israel. (Deut 10:9). To this end, their entire life was committed to God to the extent that they had to forgo all interests for such necessities in exchange for serving Him (Num 18:21–24). This helped them to survive the inevitable distractions incidental to the ownership of earthly possessions which would likely interfere with their absolute service to God. The sacrificial system, therefore, was established to create a link between the Levites who had committed their lives to performing religious services and the ordinary people who provided for their subsistence. Such exclusivity in the nature of their dedication to performing religious services increased their utility in their mission of directing the people spiritually. This further reinforced the teaching which underlies the purpose of life—to do the will of God (Deut 8:3).

Mission-Focused Stewardship from a Psalmist’s Perspective

The psalmist’s perspective of mission-focused stewardship established a critical premise that demonstrated God’s nature as the God of abundance. The psalmist sang about this abundant character by initially taking note of God’s love for His creation (Ps 5:7). It is such a powerful love which has no end or beginning that is the foundation of

the relationship between God and humans. The Psalmist also acknowledged the abundance of God's power, forgiveness, and mercy (Ps 154:7). The Psalms also express how God generously shares His abundance with His creation by drawing illustrations of the abundant supply of food and water provided to the Israelites in the wilderness (Ps 105:40).

It is in this regard that all of us have been awarded different skills, talents, and possessions, thanks to God's abundant character. Thus, when we bring together these unique talents and possessions, we embrace God's abundance. Just as the Israelites shared the abundance of their wealth and skill to build the Temple (1 Chr 29:16), we may also recognize the Provider of this abundance by jointly committing to a mission. This is upon appreciating that God is the Provider of all things, wherein we are only stewards.

Mission-Focused Stewardship from a Selected Prophetical Perspective

In this section, I will present how selected prophets and kings responded to mission-focused stewardship. Hezekiah was a king of Israel that I look up to. His faithfulness and determination towards reform demonstrated how he impressively transformed the nation of Israel who was worshiping false gods. His character reflects a noble example of a true disciple; he never stopped seeking God's face. Even so, at one point, the king succumbed to illness. He was paid a visit by the prophet Isaiah who was appointed by God to bear to him the unfortunate tidings that he would die soon. This is what a prudent disciple would readily anticipate.

While expressing dissatisfaction with such news, the king lamented bitterly as he sought healing from God. From a personal perspective, this must have been an expression

meant to prepare his soul. It was also a lamentation in the guise of repentance, noting that comfort awaits those who mourn (Matt 5:4). He must have been bitter from reproach by his conscience. This depicts the nature of a prudent disciple who is preoccupied by the desire to become better than what he is at the moment. God listens to the righteous when they cry, and Hezekiah was not an exception (Ps 34:17). God manifested His power to heal and deliver by instructing the prophet Isaiah to break the news to the King that he would have an additional 15 years to live.

Upon the restoration of his health, the attention of the king's soul should have been channeled toward glorifying God; however, King Hezekiah wrote to Babylon "singing the praises" of his wealth. At this point, it did not occur to him that all the possessions at his disposal came from God and were God's. The healing he received from God and the extension of his lifespan were meant to inspire him to undertake a mission to people. Mission-focused stewardship entails the appreciation of the dark places from which God has brought us to the new places where He is taking us. Unfortunately for Hezekiah, this was not the same. His conduct undermined prudent stewardship, considering the blessings that God had conferred upon him by guaranteeing an additional 15 years to his lifespan that was already at an end. Instead of praising God by endorsing such insights, he praised his person and his treasures.

Another character of interest for the prevailing context is the prophet Haggai. Haggai did not endorse the conduct of Israel during his time. The people had lost focus of the mission that God had entrusted them. Instead, their attention was fixed on accumulating earthly possessions. It was also important for them to show their appreciation to God for liberating them from slavery and giving them a home. The

Israelites must have forgotten the milestones through which they had walked with God to the point of shifting their attention to constructing fancy houses. It is against this background that God ordered them to build the temple as the representation of God. The temple was not to be defiled; it was to be cleansed and stocked with provisions for the people who would stop over to worship. Upon failing to prioritize such instructions, citing interference from their enemies, Israel was struck by a drought.

A clear account of the curse is illustrated by Ezra. It was after these events that the Israelites began to build the temple. Together, they pooled their resources to bring all that was needed to build the temple. This mission focus was short-lived as they were confronted by people who did not endorse the construction of the temple. They wrote to the King of Persia, claiming that the construction of the temple would stop the people from paying taxes to the government of the day and would breed rebellion against the King. Consequently, the King of Persia gave strong command to cease work on rebuilding the temple (Ezra 4:1). However, King Darius later gave orders to resume the building of the temple. He was, thus, critical to the completion of the construction work that had just commenced. He provided sufficient resources to see the construction through. Israel's stubbornness, when it came to giving tithes and offering freely, established the premise for the curse that befell them (Mal 3:8).

New Testament Church Response to Mission-Focused Stewardship

Mission-focused stewardship in this part of the Scriptures takes a new dimension. It was initiated by Jesus when He met the people He interacted with, including the disciples He called to follow Him (Matt 4:19). His focus rested mainly on this theme of

developing followers. In those days, the Sadducees, Zealots, Pharisees, and Essenes dominated Judah. They subscribed to the common Jewish culture that included watching their diet, conventional worship at the temple, carrying on the Levitical sacrificial system, and keeping the Sabbath. During His ministry, the teachings of Christ resembled those of the Beit Hillel, a popular Jewish teacher of the second half of the first century (Johnson, 2002). Christ's teachings were radical and hence, not popular among the Jewish establishment.

From the New Testament, it would appear that discipleship and stewardship lead from one to the other. Discipleship leads the way by being the mechanism through which one is prepared for initiation into stewardship. As Jesus noted during His teachings and the performance of His miracles, one must become a disciple to live up to the promise of heaven. With this, He also illustrated the true nature of His kingdom. Even so, it is important to note the distinction that occurs between discipleship and perfection. Instead of perfection, discipleship is founded on a person who is ready to serve and walk in the path of Jesus. The kingdom of heaven belongs to those who are poor in spirit (Matt 5:3).

Furstenberg (2020) stated:

In Matt 23:13–15, Jesus claims that the Pharisees seek to make their own lives easier while slamming the gates to the kingdom of heaven in the faces of their followers, and those whom they manage to convert end up on the path to Gehenna. (p. 777)

Jesus and Money

Jesus had numerous discussions about money, but we are only going to consider two of these discussions. The first is the widow's offering (Mark 12:41–44) Jesus was sitting near the temple treasury and He witnessed some individuals coming to give their offerings. Many rich people were giving big sums of money, but there was a widow who

dropped in two cents. Jesus wanted to illustrate to the disciples what it means to live for God. Jesus asked the disciples a question and made them choose who gave more. Jesus said that the widow gave more because she gave her whole life savings. Jesus showed us that we must give intentionally.

The second text is Mark 10:17-22. In this pericope, one can deduce several lessons pertinent to our standing with the Savior. The Rich Young Ruler came to see Jesus and asked Him what he needed to do to inherit eternal life. Jesus made reference to keeping the Commandments. He responded, “All these I have kept since I was a boy” (v. 20). The Lord said, “One thing you lack. Go, sell everything you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven” (v. 21). “At this, the man’s face fell. He went away sad, because he had great wealth” (v. 22). The young man wanted to secure his salvation by his own means, rather than placing his faith in the divine invitation given by the Lord.

The Gift-Based Ministry

In related contexts, stewardship has been used to refer to the discovery, development, and meticulous use of the gifts that are conferred to us without limit. Based on this definition, I draw the inference that all persons are entrusted with various abilities and talents. To this end, it would suffice to deduce that good stewards must be those who are aware of the capacities and skills conferred on them by developing and implementing them in a rational manner. From the New Testament, we can learn that all persons are conferred with at least one gift from God (Matt 25:14–19). As such, these verses invoke the essential tenets of accountability as regards the ideal usage of these gifts in the context of mission-focused stewardship.

It should be noted that our talents are not merely conferred on us to enrich ourselves at the expense of building the kingdom of God. When the Master who confers these gifts returns, He shall hold everyone accountable for the gifts that were entrusted to them. We shall all establish the extent to which we have used our talents in mission-focused stewardship. Therefore, let all that have received these gifts use them for the benefit of others in glorification of God's name.

After Pentecost, all the believers were together and had everything in common. They sold properties and possessions to give to anyone who had need. They lived a life that included their entire community; all their passions were directed toward Jesus and belonging to a community that accepted Him as Messiah. According to Acts 4:32, this supported the idea explained previously. All the believers were one in heart and mind. No one claimed that any of their possessions was their own (Acts 2:44-46).

As stewards, we represent the vessels through which the love of God is manifested on earth. Even so, it is apparent from the biblical account of Ananias and Sapphira that improper use of what has been conferred on us shall result in our downfall. The couple sought to hide part of the price for which they sold their land for their own self-gratification. As a result, they perished (Acts 5:10-11).

The Early Church

Ancient economic attitudes reflected the cultural outcome of an agrarian economy, and social values, such as the condemnation of the pursuit of anything more than a modest level of wealth, were deeply rooted in the mentalities of this era (Gotsis & Merianos, 2012). The Bible provides an account of how the challenges were manifested during the establishment of the Early Church. On the one hand, the Christians were

subjected to various forms of persecution. Notable victims include Stephen (Acts 7:59) and James (Acts 12:2). Most of the persecutions incidental to the emergence of the Early Church were perpetrated by the Roman Empire. For instance, Emperor Nero was linked to the Great Fire of Rome. In the same vein, Peter and Paul also suffered persecution at the time when Nero reigned. It is against this background that various texts under the New Testament allude to persecution while putting emphasis on the essence of endurance throughout the process. Similarly, early Christians were subjected to the same random persecutions stemming from the influence of the pagan populace that convinced the reigning authorities against the existence of Christianity. They claimed that the misfortune that befell them must have been attributable to the public defiance by Christians to worship their pagan gods. Hence, these gods were offended, and misfortune followed (Johnson, 2002).

Another challenge faced by the early church was disunity among Christians. During the 2nd and the 3rd centuries, the level of division of the church was deplorable. It was difficult for Christianity to be perceived as a united front. This was attributable to unique developments in different Christian Churches comprised of institutions that were not common in other churches throughout the world. For instance, Gnostic Christians lacked a clear hierarchy that was manifested in other Christian churches (Ehrman, 2005).

Different forms of Christianity attest to distinct perceptions about Jesus. The austere perceptions rested with the Gnostic Christians. On the one hand, Pauline Christianity emphasized the death of Christ, His resurrection, and the manifestation of His powers from those events. Contrary to this, Gnostic Christians were focused on the message and the secret knowledge that Christ conveyed to His people (Johnson, 2002).

The following part illustrates the three main groups of Christians who can be traced from the history of Christianity with the aspects they share and those that distinguish them, as well.

A Survey of Selected Church Fathers on Mission Focus

The constant denunciation, from the time of the Church Fathers onwards, of the grip in which our world is held by material concerns is more easily understood if seen in relation to another hostility, that directed against sex. The West is not the only part of the world where hostility towards money and towards sex go hand-in-hand (Erner, 2005). Based on His mission, Jesus was accused of treason. To this end, He was arrested and charged by the Romans for insurgency. His execution was, therefore, supervised by Roman soldiers. At the death of Christ, the disciples retreated to Galilee immediately (Maier, 2007). Forty years later, the Roman army waged an attack against Jerusalem with the effect of distorting the landmark upon which Jewish culture was centered (Paul). Such a disruption of Jewish culture had the effect of terminating Jewish worship at the temple. As a result of this catastrophe, two movements emerged decades after the death of Christ: the rabbinical Judaism that was traceable from the local synagogues and the Christian movement as we know it today. Some of Christ's followers remained in Jerusalem, while others dispersed to different parts of the world to spread the gospel (Maier, 2007). Towards the end of the century three groups emerged within the Christian movement as demonstrated in the review that follows.

A review of Jesus' teachings from the Gospels indicates that the Jews were the main targets of His teachings. Therefore, upon His death, His disciples promoted a new faith in Jesus with the effect of establishing a movement that became popular among

three thousand converts who can be traced to Jewish origins (Maier, 2007). Initially, the movement was dominated by Jewish followers. They observed the Mosaic laws and adhered to temple traditions in addition to eating practices that were common among the Jews (Acts 10). Later on, the group was mixed as a result of the Gentiles that joined from the mixed Jewish-Greek church at Antioch (Acts 11:19–24; Gal 2:11–14). The composition of the church also extended to pagans who were converted by Paul, people of Syrian, Asian, and Greek origins. The nature of this composition terminated the domination of the Jews in the new movement with the effect of establishing the Jewish-Gentile Christianity (Johnson, 2002).

Christ's followers, among them the disciples, who fled to Galilee as a result of His execution, had reorganized themselves under the leadership of James. Their group was unique due to the nature of the commitment in its membership to reflect a reformist movement in Judah. They set up synagogues of worship and offered animals for sacrifice in the Temple built in Jerusalem. They adhered to the Jewish holy days, circumcised their sons and remained strict to kosher diets while practicing the teachings of Jesus at the same time (Maier, 2007). Today, they are referred to by the generic name, Jewish Christians.

These Christians, under the leadership of James, were composed of people who had previously shared a close relationship with Jesus. They subscribed to the belief that Jesus was the promised Messiah and a great Teacher. Even so, they did not link Him to any deity. Many accounts are recorded tracing frictional relationships between Paul's followers and these Jewish Christians who suffered persecution, slavery, and death from attacks by the Romans (Dorr, Hawthorne, & Winter, 1999).

The converted Jews called Jesus by the name Yeshua. They found His works fascinating. Further, they were impressed by Jesus' personal insights regarding the past, the present and the future. Unlike other teachers and prophets during and before His time, He addressed spiritual issues with unique authority that others had not. It was based on this nature of His teachings that the Christian Jews validated Him as the Messiah whom they had anticipated. Other illustrations that they could draw from included His ability to perform miracles and tell parables, in addition to His commitment to God from a tender age when He was spotted speaking in the temple when He was only 12 years old (Luke 2:41–52). Such examples of Christ, including allowing Himself to be successfully prosecuted and subjected to crucifixion without a fight, influenced the Jewish Christian's belief in the change that Yeshua imparted on the world (Pritz, 1988).

Saul was a Jewish youth who hailed from Tarsus. He initially committed his life to persecuting Jewish Christians in honor of the priests sitting in Jerusalem. He was subjected to a powerful conversion that kept him away for several years. As a result, he went on to change his name from Saul to Paul. This was with the effect of ranking him among the most prolific Christian missionaries of his time before he was eventually killed by the Romans. Paul established a distinct Christian movement that was comprised of mixed elements of paganism that had previously been the tradition of the Greeks, Romans, Persians, Egyptians, and Mesopotamians (Maier, 2007).

It was from Paul that the perception of Jesus as the Word emerged. This was essential for his version of Christianity as a way of conquering other religions that competed with Christianity within the Roman Empire. He also refused to observe various rules of behavior that had been traditionally practiced by Jesus and His disciples. Further,

he also rejected the Mosaic laws. According to his teachings, as they prevailed then, Paul indicated that God had revoked His Covenant with the Jews. He also taught this to other Christian groups that existed then (Johnson, 1976).

Paul's series of missionary journeys extended to the Eastern Mediterranean where he recruited many Gentiles. He organized churches in many of the urban areas in competition with Greek paganism, Mithraism, Judaism, and other competing Christian movements. His epistles record how he and his movement were in unending theological conflict with the Jewish Christian movement. Paul, being in conflict with the Roman Empire, was arrested and transported to Rome where he was held under house arrest. He was executed there about 65 CE. Paul's churches, however, survived his death and flourished. Some of his letters were later accepted into the New Testament of Christian scriptures (Johnson, 1976).

Valens was a veteran who used to help the Philippians e He was punished for following Jesus. He was persecuted and all his possessions were stolen. Life became so difficult for him that he abandoned Jesus to get all of his belongings back. In his discussion of Valens' sin, Polycarp wrote, "I warn you, therefore: avoid the love of money" (as cited in Milne, 2014, Defense section, para. 3). Consequently, most scholars have seen some kind of connection between Valens' sin and the warnings throughout Polycarp's *Epistle to the Philippians*. Berding (2002, as cited in Milne, 2014) saw it as a lesson to the Philippians to learn to avoid the love of money through Valens' bad example.

Ellen White noted that God is not pleased with those people who claim to be His followers, yet they abandon those who are devoted to God's work to the extent that they

lack the necessities while they are actively engaged in ministry. Such self-centered people will be called before God to account for the manner in which they have misused God's possessions with which they were entrusted and having caused depression and heartbreak upon God's servants as a result of their selfish prospects. Those who are called to become faithful servants of God surrender all their engagements and remain dedicated to God's service. It is against this background that their selfless efforts should be rewarded by wages that are sufficient to support them and their families (James, 1999).

Paul's conversion as an apostle to the Gentiles dates back to as early as three years after Jesus' death. Paul was in Damascus when he received his call. Paul's mission spread the message of Christianity throughout Asia Minor (present-day Turkey), into Macedonia, and then Greece within 21 years. Due to the nature of wide-spread Christianity in this era, it would be impossible to find that all the Christians of such diversity would believe in the same doctrines (Ehrman, 2005).

There is already a beginning with great diversity that had a slow process of establishing greater unity among the diverse churches. That is probably why Paul wrote letters; he wanted to make sure that those newly converted Christians in Ephesus, Philippi, Thessalonica, and Corinth had some uniformity in their beliefs (Johnson, 1976). His mission was even more challenging considering that even when he departed from Corinth, some people went to deceive the converts arguing that Paul had not provided them with sufficient wisdom from Jesus. However, Paul had to write back reiterating the teaching of Christ's death and wisdom (Fredriksen, 2008).

Gnosticism represents a religious movement that originated from pre-Christian

times. Gnostics bore characteristics attributable to pagan religious practices in Asia, Babylon, Egypt, Greek, and Syria. They were also influenced by astrology, Judaism, and Christianity. In addition, they also acknowledged various characters from the pre-Christian regime as revered religious figures. For example, Adam and his son Seth were especially important figures in Gnostic Christianity. The Gnostic version of the Old Testament uniquely bears various figures who cannot be traced in the canonical versions. Daniel's friends are also called by different names in Gnostic texts and are often invoked (Johnson, 1976).

According to them, they were the custodians of secrets concerning God, humans, and the whole world that the common demography was unaware of. They were also popular for unique interpretations of the Bible, the world, and other phenomena. According to their teachings, the God of the Old Testament was defective and inferior. They perceived Him as evil, jealous, rigid, and detestable, besides being the God who oversaw genocide (Johnson, 1976). It is against this background that some Gnostic Christians established distinct churches and others sided with Pauline Christianity.

Gnostic Christians taught different accounts of God and Jesus compared to other movements. They generally subscribed to the thought that the current world was evil, having been created by a lesser and evil god unlike the true God. According to their beliefs, every person has an element of the divine that seeks to reunite with the good God. They also believed that people could be saved by this unique insight that they had. Some of them dismissed the consequences of anything that happened during the life of man premised on the argument that the human body was mortal (Ehrman, 2005).

As opposed to the common belief that Jesus was both human and divine, Gnostic

Christians only taught and acknowledged His divine nature while dismissing the reality of His human aesthetics. While Christians thought Jesus transcended sin during His death, Gnostics believe that He was hidden away from the physical world for three days. Although Christians subscribe to reading the Old Testament, Gnostics believe in the exclusivity of the New Testament (Ehrman, 2005). Other believers like the Orthodox Christians consider them heretics; Gnostics believe that they are true Christians. Their perceptions regarding Jesus diverged from what would become the Christian Church prior to the existence of the canonical Bible (Ehrman, 2005). The gnostics are discussed to show that there were many religious beliefs in the Early Church that could have led the Christians astray, but God always protects His children who serve Him faithfully. The Christians of the Early Church had a firm conviction about the mission of the church and this was why they abandoned everything to put God first. Augustin believed that temporal goods should be devoted not only to God, but also to the common good through acts of charity (Cagle, 2017).

In conclusion, there was much division in Christianity throughout the history of its beginning. Time and time again, religious groups have been determined to make changes in hopes of drawing nearer to God's will. Such an attitude is commendable despite the prevailing efforts of reformation from which another group with a distinct name emerges.

Mission-Focused Stewardship

Ellen White's Views: Time, Talent, Treasure

Ellen White (2000) wrote from a unique perspective that clearly outlined the role of tithing in mission-focused stewardship. She established the historical background of

the unchanging rule of God's claim for tithe that was recognized and honored as early as when Abraham honored God by paying tithe to Melchizedek (Gen 14:20). During the establishment of the nation of Israel, the law of tithing was reiterated as a critical statute, and obedience to it guaranteed their prosperity. This system was meant to impose the teaching that God remained the source of every blessing that they received and that they owed their gratitude to Him for all He had provided.

The practice has been a constant reminder to people that God is the true Proprietor of all their belongings. Thus, we are all stewards of His land, goods, and other possessions. Tithing represents submission of the first fruits of our land to Him who has given us that land (Deut 26:5, 8–11). While other people would fear that their contributions for religious and charitable purposes would reduce them to poverty, the Hebrews learned the opposite. Instead, this was one of the circumstances under which their prosperity was preconditioned. Otherwise, poverty set in. White (1980) demonstrated this contrast by alluding to the days of the prophet Haggai. When the people retracted from building God's temple due to consistent opposition from their enemies, they descended into a severe drought.

Tithing plays a critical role in taking the gospel of salvation to the entire world. Tithe enables those whom God has called to serve as pastors and missionaries to build up the Church of God faithfully and expand His kingdom. God's intention is that His people be the light bearers to the entire earth. Tithing is one way to honor and worship God; it is a constant reminder of God's existence and ownership. Since God's people are the bearers of the light and the truth, the extent to which this light and truth diffuse throughout the planet is dependent upon our efforts and offerings. To this extent, White

(2012) established that unlike the commitment to outreach and preach the Word of God, tithing is also one of the ways through which a true steward may advance God's mission. This is based on the acknowledgment that tithing directly supports the dispersion of this light for which we are the bearers.

Contemporary Views

Modern perspectives portray different interpretations of mission stewardship. These varying practices are informed by various schools of philosophy ranging from the fixated liberation theology to the reformed theology and the flexible postmodern perspectives. Each of these perspectives implies varying constructions of mission stewardship which contextualize and account for the nature of mission stewardship that is experienced in the world today.

Liberation theology is one of the contemporary approaches that define the modern perception of mission-focused stewardship. It involves a more practical approach to implementing Christian ideals through radical movements. What underlies liberation theology is the implementation of Christian ideals while targeting the elimination of human oppression. Despite its religious background, liberation theology also bears economic and political force in its operation in the world today with a view to implementing Christianity. Liberation theology is a philosophy to end oppression. It gives the point of view that people matter. Fitzgerald (2007) explained that economics—in the general sense of the critical study of production, distribution, and consumption of wealth in human society—is a central theme of liberation theology. Although liberation theologians do not address the technical questions that constitute modern economic theory, they are concerned with the broader issues of the way in which economic

organization relates to the historical experience of humanity, in general, and to the “infinite value” of the poor to God, in particular.

The unique aspect of liberation theology is that it establishes a unique religious movement that implements principles of the kingdom of God by liberating the people from various social, economic, and political structures that qualify as being oppressive. The nature of the oppression that the movement seeks to eliminate is measured by the yardstick of human suffering, specifically poverty. Therefore, in a quest to free people from poverty and oppression, advocates of the movement challenge the social, political, and economic aspects in society that cause harm to the people, undermine their dignity, burden them, or restrain them from accessing basic needs such as food, shelter, and clothing.

The mode of operation by the movement involves the identification of a social, political, or economic aspect of suffering humanity and then produces a theology based on that focus. Therefore, even though the force purports to implement the ideals of the kingdom of God, it is apparent that the doctrines enshrined in the Bible do not inform its premise; rather, it is the element of human suffering that establishes the starting point. Its proponents advance this theology through protests, creation of public awareness, establishing Christian communities, re-structuring theology, and even taking up arms in revolutionary confrontations with oppressive governments. For example, liberation theologians would seek to correct gender and racial discrimination, categorizing them as a sinful aspect nurtured in monopolistic capitalism.

Liberation theology is compatible with mission-focused stewardship to the extent that it involves an international Christian missionary activity. However, such a mission

only purports to limit God's concerns exclusively to poverty. Ideal stewardship portrays God to be concerned with all of humanity, unlike a restriction of God's concern to the poor and purported by the proponents of liberation theology. This modern perspective of stewardship is limiting in nature, contrary to what the Bible anticipates. It purports that stewards should only undertake missions to liberate people from oppression incidental to poverty. This perspective already departs from biblical tenets that acknowledge other concerns and other groups of people (unlike the poor) with which mission-focused stewards should be concerned. Thus, it is a mistake when the mission is only used to portray our Creator as exclusively the God of the poor.

Reformed theology depicts a decent foundation of modern mission-focused stewardship. From its doctrines, it can be noted that proponents of Reformed theology are meticulous adherents to the Word of God, unlike those of liberation theology, for whom poverty comes first. As such, this movement believes that God is only manifested to the people through His Word. Thus, His followers do not know anything beyond His self-revelation through the Bible (Allen, 2010). Furthermore, the theologians acknowledge God's revelation through His Son Jesus Christ, taking into account the fact that Christ has been the only mediator between the people and God.

Based on their tenets, reformed theologians subscribe to the Levitical background of mission-focused stewardship. Considering that the movement relies heavily on biblical doctrines, it encourages Christians to bless others with what God has blessed them (Ps 97), this being based on the premise that God owns everything, yet we cannot give Him what already belongs to Him (Ps 50:10). Therefore, the movement encourages tithing and offering out of a free will as a principle of Christian stewardship (Allen, 2010).

The postmodern philosophy of religion introduces a unique, logical, and practical element of mission-focused stewardship. This movement is premised on the appreciation of multiple interpretations of the truth, assuming that religious truth is subjective and varies with individual interpretation. The proponents of postmodernism acknowledge that constant change in society inhibits the existence of absolute religious truths. Therefore, in the context of mission-focused stewardship, this philosophy of religion would imply that every Christian, based on the biblical concept of stewardship, is at liberty to adopt what satisfies their conscience as mission-focused stewardship. This would vary from tithing to evangelizing or other modern means of public worship toward dispersing the light of God's word across the entire planet. We are living in post-modern times where everything is moving quickly. The world is obsessed with money and technology. Francis (as cited in Folmer, 2014) returned to the motif of free markets as false gods several times. "We have created new idols," he wrote. "The worship of the ancient golden calf has returned in a new and ruthless guise in the idolatry of money and the dictatorship of an impersonal economy lacking a truly human purpose" (para. 3). Francis maintained that "man is reduced to one of his needs alone: consumption" (para. 3).

Summary

This chapter was a reflection on mission-focused stewardship from a Biblical perspective. The book of Genesis discusses the Lordship of God that illustrates His authority as Creator and Savior. We looked at this from a patriarchal perspective, a Levitical system perspective, a psalmist perspective, a prophetic perspective, and a New Testament church response. All of these sections present mission-focused stewardship as a way of living and a relationship with Christ.

Thus, as we acknowledge God as the Proprietor and Creator of all things and the Provider of our wealth and possessions through tithe and charitable offerings. We should appreciate that this, itself, indirectly amounts to doing His work and making His will known. Now, as well as then, freewill tithes and offerings are required to sustain the gospel which involves spreading the message of salvation to others. Therefore, even though we may not be involved in the practical spread of the message of salvation, freely giving what has been freely given to us is critical to sustaining God's mission. Therefore, a mission-focused steward is the one who tithes and gives charitable offerings freely as it guarantees God's honor and wins more souls to Christ (White, 2000). She also reminded us that as the Proprietor of all things, God has entrusted us with the proprietary means necessary for spreading the gospel. He guarantees that faithful stewards shall be entrusted with more (1 Sam 2:30) and promises abundance for those who bring tithes to His house.

CHAPTER 3

LITERATURE SUPPORTING MISSION-FOCUSED STEWARDSHIP PLAN FOR THE SHILOH BILINGUAL FRENCH SDA CHURCH IN BROOKLYN, NEW YORK

Introduction

This chapter is based on the literature review of mission-focused stewardship. I did some extensive research, and my focus is on two variables: mission and stewardship. A topic apart from mission that assisted with my research is small groups. Small groups are used as a motivational tool to encourage mission-focused stewardship. This is the very reason why small groups are essential and why it is going to be presented in this research. To start, we must discuss what mission was like in the SDA Church. It is also important to analyze Shiloh's perspective on missionary (i.e., the individuals actually involved in the process of mission) and we also have to evaluate different periods in the development and growth of the concept and its implementation. I had the opportunity to read a lot of documents, books, and articles on mission, stewardship, and small groups. These books had a variety of resources and tools and were very interactive. These tools and resources can be utilized and give a perspective on how mission was done in the past. You also get a framework of contemporary authors and how they viewed mission. I will give a brief history of the SDA organization and the different phases of how mission was constructed. The SDA history is an important focus because our model, Shiloh, is a part

of that organization. We organized and worked in small groups. Working in small groups, we noticed a correlation between mission, stewardship, and small groups. In today's society, we are motivating members to utilize small groups to accomplish mission.

Mission Focus

Herrington, Bonem, and Furr (2000) defined mission as “a general description of God’s eternal purpose for the church” (p. 86). I understand from this statement that the church must always be in mission. However, mission cannot be done without standards. As Stetzer (2006) stated, “Missional implies taking the approach of a missionary-being indigenous to the culture, seeking to understand and learn, adapting methods to the mission field-but winding up in the biblical form of a church” (p. xii). Every new believer must apply the new method of mission which is found in the Holy Spirit and from reading the Bible. The Holy Spirit knows the mind, opens eyes, and knows how to touch hearts. I agree with Carter and Porter (2017) when they said that evangelicals did not trust personal experience in the abstract, and, in fact, they assumed that most people viewed the world with eyes clouded by sin. However, they insisted that Christians gained new powers of perception during conversion. Certainly, true power comes from God. As Scripture says, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creature and has power over all evil (2 Cor 5:17). Without this transformation, an individual will not have any compassion for others. Only conversion opens one to a new perception of the gospel.

Payne (2008) went further to say that the mission is not only to preach, but also to plant. Some characteristics of most church planting movements are “a climate of uncertainty in society, insulation from outsiders, a high cost for following Christ, bold fearless faith, family-based conversion patterns, rapid incorporation of new believers,

worship in the heart language, divine signs and wonders, on the job leadership training and missionaries suffered” (p. 183). Church involvement is one of the best ways to uphold the church after conversion. It allows everyone to be involved—young and old. It empowers and equips all the members to become disciples so they can go forward and make more disciples.

Gibbs and Bolger (2008) stated that “God created us to be creative, to be partners with him in making something beautiful, which in turn inspires others to turn towards God in wonder and awe” (p. 173). God sent the mission and ministry of the logos—the mission and ministry of the Spirit, the institutional leadership of the Church, and the charismatic leadership of the Church. By having been created, we become very useful in the salvation of others. There are two important aspects in this declaration that caught my attention. First, “God sending the ministry of the logos.....” in the sense that everyone who accepts the logos must be involved in the ministry. The ministry of the logos is an example for us. When Christ came to earth, He trained the disciples to make disciples so they could witness to the rest of the non-believers. We are called to do the same thing.

The second aspect is the mission and ministry of the Spirit. Right after Jesus left, the Holy Spirit took over and continued the work of Jesus Christ on earth. The Holy Spirit works on the mind, thought, and heart; it dwells in us. Because of the Spirit, we have leadership and the power to lead the church in the way Jesus wants us to. The Holy Spirit also enables us to feed the sheep. Feeding the sheep is like becoming friends with those we lead. Friendship plays an important part in the accomplishment of the mission because it allows the church to know his or her neighbors; touch the world and reach

everyone. By being present and available, it allows us to practice the ministry of presence.

Johnson (1976), in his statement, argues that

A keyword in this text is friendship. In fact, I believe it is the best word around which to build a bridge between my first and second concern. In a word, that second concern is for collaboration, which means literally co-laboring or striving together as person called to be one in Christ Jesus to fulfill the pastoral mission of the church. (p. 14)

People cannot work together if they cannot find common ground, and whom better to find commonality with than a friend.

This whole idea of togetherness is best fostered by different activities and programs organized by churches for the purpose of fellowship. However, how can there be fellowship without funds? Being financially stable is essential when planting a church. Missionaries, when going on different trips, may sometimes need to use their own funds or get help from the church. In that sense, Scaria (2006) affirmed: “Economic activity is to be carried on according to its own methods and laws within the limits of the moral order, so that God’s plan for humankind may be realized” (p. 82). Funds are needed for almost any plan of growth and evangelism a church may choose to put forth. Whether it is for a potluck, game night, crusades, concerts, or trips, money is needed for church progress.

Izuzquiza (2009), well defined the concept of witnessing in his statement. It is safe to say that you can be born in the same country as someone, yet not speak the language that the person understands. It is not the language they speak, but rather, the language of their heart.

It is a fact that we live in a pluralistic society. At the same time, the Christian message is a universal one, intended to bring salvation to all humankind. It is clear that we cannot remain enclosed within our own circles. So, we need to find ways to

dialogue with others, to understand them, and to make our message meaningful. We need to learn their language and try to translate our Christian proposal into that common language. (Izuzquiza, 2009, p. 20)

One thing that interests me is that Izuzquiza (2009) said to “try to translate our Christian proposal into that common language” (p. 20). The Christian proposal, as mentioned before, is to know what is going on inside people and to be able to reach them at their level. It is to journey with them. We need the Holy Spirit to reach their hearts and take them to Christ. It is in the same aspect that Collins and Fahey (2008) made their declaration that “for koinonia as an expression of otherness to be shared in a cosmos riven by division Zizoulas argues that communion with other requires the experience of the cross” (p. 36).

A Brief Examination of the Seventh-day Adventist Organization Heritage on Mission

From 1840 to 1970

The SDA Church was established around William Miller’s time in the year 1844. After the Great Disappointment, the Holy Spirit revealed to His people the truth in 1860. The Church has been organized ever since. The founders of our Church had a passion for preaching the gospel and that is why they decided to go around the world to witness. One of the things that helped them was the distribution of books. With that, the reach of the gospel expanded, and SDAs became known worldwide. In the beginning, it was very difficult financially. Many used their own revenue to move forward, but in time, they received grants that allowed them to afford missionary trips and preach the gospel around the world.

According to Rosario (2014), “for the 1970s, evangelists, administrators and

Adventist theologians, especially in the United States, showed great concern for the apparent impact of city effect on evangelism” (p. 2). Urban ministry has become one of the important movements from 1970 until the present. As the city population increased, more leaders were inspired to have evangelism in the cities. God always inspired the SDA Church with new ways of witnessing; this is evident in the way the mission statement has evolved.

From 1985 to 2016

In the *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook* (General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, Office of Archives and Statistics, 1987), The General Conference had “the object of the conference,” rather than a mission statement. Article II—Object says: “The object of this Conference is to teach all nations the everlasting gospel of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ and the commandments of God” (p. 9). In 1990, it was changed to “The purpose of the general conference” (General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, Office of Archives and Statistics, 1990). Article II—Purpose says: “The purpose of the General Conference is to teach all nations the everlasting gospel of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ and the commandments of God” (p. 9).

In the *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook 2005*, the General Conference referred to “the mission of the Seventh Day Adventist church” (General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, Office of Archives and Statistics, 2005):

The mission of the SDA Church is to proclaim to all peoples the everlasting gospel in the context of the three angels’ messages of Revelation 14:6–12, leading them to accept Jesus as personal Savior and to unite with His church, and nurturing them in preparation for His soon return. (p. 8)

In 2016, the mission statement was “to proclaim the everlasting message of the three Angels” (p. 8).

In 2011, the General Conference removed the words, “To proclaim to all people” and added, “To make disciples of all people” (General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, Office of Archives and Statistics, 2011).

The mission of the SDA Church is to make disciples of all people, communicating the everlasting gospel in the context of the three angels’ messages of Revelation 14:6-12, leading them to accept Jesus as personal Savior and unite with His remnant Church, discipline them to serve Him as Lord, and preparing them for His soon return. (p. 8)

In 2016, the mission statement was “to proclaim the everlasting message of the three angels” (General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, Office of Archives and Statistics, 2016). Proclaim the everlasting gospel embraced by the Three Angels’ messages (Rev 14:6–12) and prepare the world for Christ’s soon return. Over the years, the Holy Spirit has allowed the church to have a better understanding of the mission. In the beginning, their mission was simply preaching the gospel, but now it is to make disciples. Unfortunately, many times in church, we are content to have members but no disciples. Every church member should be a disciple. The purpose of each disciple is to make other disciples. The idea of discipleship implies that they should give their all—time, talent, and money to the accomplishment of the mission.

A Brief Look into the Historical Understanding within the SDA Organization

The Adventist Church hierarchy is organized as follows: It begins with Sabbath school, a company which is the local church, several local churches constitute a Conference, several conferences are considered a Union, a group of Unions make up a Division, and all the Divisions make up the General Conference. The General Conference

is the headquarters of the organization. In all the different levels, mission can be defined and analyzed. We will be at the local church level to examine how the congregation views mission as a whole. Shiloh Bilingual will be used as a tool to examine this. In the SDA Church, we have many obstacles that prevent us from evangelizing. For one, many members have lost their zeal for evangelism, especially in the more highly developed countries where work seems to be the priority. Many always seem to be tired, too busy for anything, and only willing to assist in the service on Sabbath mornings. According to Burrill (2009),

one of the biggest barriers church leaders face in developing this culture of evangelism is a nagging doubt about some part of the Adventism message. Over the years I have observed pastors with doubts and have noticed that they rarely exhibited passion for reaching people. (p. 22)

In order to regain our passion, we must really understand our principles more and our heritage less. Understating where we come from and what we represent will help us to reach where we intend to go. To do so, let us consider the following mission statements.

Local Church

White (1902) stated:

While in New York in the winter of 1901, I received light in regard to the work in that great city. Night after night the course that our brethren should pursue passed before me. In Greater New York the message is to go forth as a lamp that burneth. God will raise up laborers for this work, and His angels will go before them. Though our large cities are fast reaching a condition similar to the condition of the world before the Flood, though they are as Sodom for wickedness, yet there are in them many honest souls, who, as they listen to the startling truths of the advent message, will feel the conviction of the Spirit. New York is ready to be worked. In that great city the message of truth will be given with the power of God. The Lord calls for workmen. He calls upon those who have gained an experience in the cause to take up and carry forward in His fear the work to be done in New York and in other large cities of America. He calls also for means to be used in this work. (p. 54)

With this quote, we see that, as daunting as a great city might be, we are called to witness to the people so that they, too, may know the Lord.

Shiloh Bilingual French SDA Church follows the objective of the General Conference Mission statement: “To reach New York City and to make disciples with the distinctive, Christ-centered, Seventh-day Adventist message of hope and wholeness” (Shiloh Bilingual French SDA Church, 2019). In the context of stewardship, we recognize that Jesus is the root, the gospel is the tree, we (local churches, Conferences, Unions, Divisions, and the General Conference) represent the branches, and finally, the lay workers represent the leaves. We all have a part to play in the incoming and outgoing of this great mission at hand. Ultimately, we work alongside each other with the same goals and objectives yet with different positions. According to White (2012), “larger churches [are] to assist smaller ones” (p. 130). Clearly, no one role is insignificant as none of us is indispensable. Any missing link can cause stagnation in the mission towards salvation. We all matter in pursuit of saving souls for Christ.

Kochupurackal (2007) stated that

the famous Indian theologian Amolorpavadass defines this mission as a process of interpretation or prophetic sharing by a group of Christians of their double experience of the world and the word (gospel) with the whole community of the people in the mutual interplay of receiving and giving, while journeying together with the human community in the same stream of life within a process of all around sharing towards the common goal of freedom and justice, integral development, liberation, wholeness and communion. (p. 34)

Our neighbors are those suffering from mental illness, poverty, and or homelessness.

Most of the time, they could be a member of the family. Ministers do not pay close attention to those in their household. There is a kind of pretense that everything is fine.

Sometimes, conducting a seminar about reaching people is a good idea.

Radner (1998) stated that “perhaps it is God’s will to bring the church to its end; but in this case, it is not the church that must die, but we ourselves, in giving ourselves over to its fictive welfare” (p. 354). We see here that stewardship does not only negate order, principle, and discipline, but also that sacrifice is the least common denominator—an individual effort makes a “greater denominator,” which is the collective pursuit of the advancement of a greater cause.

Conference

The Greater New York Conference mission statement says, “Making disciples by touching hearts and changing lives with the everlasting gospel” (Greater New York Conference, 2018). This mission statement shows that the Conference understands well the teaching of Ellen White when it presents such a mission. It is up to its followers to take up the challenge and make it happen.

Union

The Atlantic Union Mission statement says, “To support and facilitate our six Conferences and institutions in reaching all people with the Adventist Christ-centered message of hope and wholeness” (Atlantic Union Conference, n.d.a). The emphasis of this mission is unity. Having each conference work independently is not the way to achieve their greatest potential. It must be a united effort. When all the Conferences are on the same page, it ensures that the gospel will reach those who are in need of the truth faster and more effectively.

Division

The North America Division mission statement says, “To reach North America

and the world with the distinctive, Christ-centered, Seventh-day Adventist message of hope and wholeness” (North American Division of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, n.d.). One should note the order presented until now. Only when the local churches, Conferences, and Unions adhere to their mission can a difference can be made in the world at large; not the other way around.

General Conference

The General Conference Mission statement says that the mission of the Seventh-day Adventist Church is to “make disciples of Jesus Christ who live as His loving witnesses and proclaim to all people the everlasting gospel of the Three Angels’ Messages in preparation for His soon return (Matt 28:18-20, Acts 1:8, Rev 14:6-12”;

General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, n.d.). Today, we need to train young adults, deacons, and church members how to evangelize and win people for God. I think the best way to identify the invisible people in our community is first to start observing the community around us; second, to listen with our hearts; and finally, to get involved in activities where people need help. Rosario (2014) argued that “in the General Conference Session of 1980 held in Dallas, a secularism committee was appointed under the direction of Dr. Humberto Rasi, in order to understand the phenomenon and find strategies to address it” (p. 2). Addressing urban ministry, training, equipping, and empowering disciples is the best action of the end time. If the church has some young persons or adult professionals, let them get involved in the community by contributing their gifts to the welfare of the community.

With the help of the Holy Spirit, people’s minds will be prepared to accept the message. According to Percy (2010),

strictly speaking, the vast majority of theology should be the study of the implicit rather than the explicit. For it is in the life of congregations and denominations that the gospel is discerned, interpreted and lived. Theology for the most part happens in discipleship; it is not read in textbooks. (p. 17)

More lives will be touched if one looks at people more subjectively than objectively.

Seeing and understanding tangible problems and meeting them where they are gives ministry a more human approach. This method of evangelizing should work for anyone.

According to what we have read in the Bible, the gospel is for everyone. In some countries, there is a tendency for a person who is rich, to believe that he does not need Jesus. This is wrong. In some places, if a person is poor, that person might not get enough attention because of the social conditions in the community. People could be left behind because of their nationality or their color. This is a serious problem that should be treated before it is too late in the Christian community.

Christian Stewardship

In the past, when individuals heard the word stewardship, they thought only of money. Unfortunately, some people fail to understand what stewardship really means. Stewardship refers to the lifestyle of those who accept Christ as their personal Savior because they fit Christ into every detail of their lives. Such people are passionate about supporting ministry and recognize that God will use their money, time, talents, and intelligence to fulfill His will. The Atlantic Union is doing a good job by encouraging everyone to participate in stewardship. The Atlantic Union's mission statement is one of the sources of motivation for the Conferences attached to it. Atlantic Union's Mission Statement says,

The mission of the Department of Stewardship is to emphasize the lordship of Jesus Christ, to enhance the integration of the gospel into the Christian lifestyle, to

encourage faithful stewardship and to facilitate the individual, leadership, and corporate dimensions of stewardship as partnership with God” (Atlantic Union Conference, n.d.b).

I believe that disciples must have a close relationship with God. Being close to Him is a blessing. In becoming disciples, they have the capacity to use their wealth wisely on earth for the fulfillment of the great commission. Maxson and Lézeau (2006) declared: “Stewardship is more than money; it is a lifestyle. This lifestyle is significant in our journey as disciples” (p. 7). Jena (2003) explained clearer what Christian stewardship is:

Stewardship is a most misunderstood word today. Here the word is used to mean a caretaker/servant who uses all the resources and benefits of his/her master for the good of the community. This is not a managerial job. Everything that belongs to the master is under the control of the steward. And this steward has to plan and work in a manner that the resources entrusted to him/her are used carefully to fulfill the requirements of all others. (p. 100)

Each Christian should visualize stewardship with heavenly eyes because our true home is not on earth; it is where Jesus went to prepare a place for us. While we wait for Jesus’ glorious return, our job is to spread the gospel so that more people can be saved. Nothing is ours on this earth.

Kureethadam (2014) affirmed that the Greek word *oikos* signifies “home.” Stewardship is about responsible housekeeping; it is about dwelling on Earth, our common home. It appears that we have forgotten that dominion has its root in *dominus*, “dweller in the house” or “caretaker”; the Latin equivalent of *oikos* in ecology. We have reduced stewardship only to ourselves, forgetting about the “*oikos*.” I believe God gives us a lot of privileges by putting us in charge of our environment. If we are faithful with the task God has given, we will be rewarded.

Park (2007) stated that “membership in the church in the church includes both

participation in institutional forms and actions and engagement in common” (pp. 55, 56).
Jesus did not put us on the earth to be only consumers but to be producers. As a result, we are called in solidarity to take care of the church.

Meeks (2007) declared:

If churches that for more than a century have shaped themselves according to corporate economy can reshape themselves to stand in greater solidarity with those who are excluded from the reigning political economy, they could create new models of mission as cooperative seeking of human dignity for all and equity in the goods necessary for the flourishing of human life. (pp. 5–6)

Based on Meeks’ quotation, we can be better than politicians because we are guided by the Holy Spirit. We can transform the earth into a miniature heaven.

Berry (2006) completes my idea by saying that

Christians believe that this world belongs to God by creation, redemption and sustenance, and that He has entrusted it to humankind, made in his image and responsible to him; we are in the position of stewards, tenants, curators, trustees or guardians, whether or not we acknowledge this responsibility. Stewardship implies caring management, not selfish exploitation. (pp. 78–79)

Love is the language of stewardship, and it is anti-selfishness. Love is dynamic; it transforms the congregation from one generation to another. Roxburgh and Romanuk (2006) stated that “no performative zone performance organization lasts forever. Sooner or later the context changes to such a degree that the primary programs, resources and skills that worked well in a long period of stability become a liability” (p. 58). I applaud the SDA Churches that are constantly thriving to develop new visions for the church in mission-focused stewardship. Each time the church reaches a plateau, instead of becoming a liability, the Holy Spirit permits it to grow.

Niebuhr (2008) stated:

The time called particularly for the reformation of the church, and I was among those for whom this was the special task. As a convinced Protestant (not an anti-Catholic)

who saw the sovereignty of God being usurped by the spirit of capitalism and nationalism, I felt strongly that the times called for the rejection of ‘Cultural Protestantism’ and for the return of the Church to confession of its own peculiar faith and ethos. (p. 1)

According to Peterson (2013):

While many churches are still dreaming Christendom dreams and trying to find ways to reclaim their ‘bring up the numbers’, others see the ‘disestablishment of the churches’ as an opportunity for the church to rediscover its identity in this new context. (p. 83)

Tithe and Offering

Philosophy and Lifestyle Considerations

Here is a statement from Ellen White (1855) herself:

Some have been dissatisfied, and have said, “I will no longer pay my tithe; for I have no confidence in the way things are managed at the heart of the work.” But will you rob God because you think the management of the work, this is not right? Make your complaint, plainly and openly, in the right spirit, to the proper ones. Send in your petitions for things to be adjusted and set in order; but do not withdraw from the work of God, and prove unfaithful, because others are not doing right. (p. 249)

So many people mistakenly think they can hold on their tithe and offerings in order to teach their leaders a lesson. They do not realize they are not dealing with man, but with God. There is due punishment for those who garnish God’s funds, and it may not necessarily be the leaders who suffer, but those who directly “rob God.”

Danilchick (2016) stated that “as each has received a gift, employ it for one another, as good stewards of God's varied grace” (p. 35). God gave talents and gifts so it is to Him you must give tribute as thanks for that which he has given. Those who keep God’s blessings to themselves and do not offer anything back to Him run the risk of losing all they had received.

Oden (2015) stated that “what furthers life is whatever ministers to the integration

of individual life into the life of the community, and the life of the human community into the warp and weft of all living things on earth” (p. 79). The best way to offer God thanks for His gifts and talent is by sharing them with those in the community. In doing so, one allows more people to witness the love of the Father and causes others to establish their faith and grow as they accept His grace and mercy.

According to Chandler (2016), “simplicity of lifestyle is a great contribution toward health. The four pillars of health involving optimal nutrition, physical exercise, sleep, and stress reduction contribute to honoring the body and God who created the body” (p. 192). Giving does not necessarily need to be done extravagantly. The simpler and less affected one is, the more effective one will be. Using the four pillars as a mode of inspiration would be a great way to start. Just by showing someone you care for their wellbeing can be enough to win them for Christ.

Theory of Motivation

Focus has a relationship with motivation. The two terms are synonymous. To be focused is to be motivated, and if you are focused, then you are motivated. This is the reason why the theory of motivation is essential. Motivation is very important psychologically and spiritually for human life. I agree with Sadri and Clarke’s (2011) statement:

Motivation relates to a range of psychological processes that guide an individual toward a goal and cause that person to keep pursuing that goal. Motivation often is described in terms of direction (the choice of one activity over another), intensity (how hard an employee tries) and persistence (how long an employee continues with a behavior, even in the face of obstacles or adverse circumstances). (p. 45)

When you talk about charity, people can be motivated to give or discouraged from giving. Martin-Schramm and Stivers (2003) made the following declaration: “Possession

can easily plug our ears to the earring of God's word. A person cannot have two masters" (p. 68). To tell the truth, money is a blessing and a curse. When people are attached to money, and money is their master, the only thing they see is themselves and their money. However, when people love God, money becomes the way to bless and support others. What is interesting is that Maslow (Sullivan, 2016) did not include money in his theory, but he lists the primary needs of humans.

Brown and Cullen (2006) gave a summary of the pyramid when they said that Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs (see Figure 2), or "pyramid form," works up from the most fundamental of human needs. For example, only when the most basic needs, identified as human physiological needs, have been met can safety/security needs be met, and only when safety/security needs have been met, can belongingness needs be considered, and so on, all the way through to the other identified needs of esteem needs, cognitive needs, aesthetics needs, to self-actualizing needs (p. 108).

This demonstrates that God is an organized God, so it is not surprising that He would create mankind with such a wonderful, fail-proof system. People were created under a self-preservation mode and everything that we do helps us to stay alive so that we may thrive.

If evangelization is done seriously, God will open our minds and give us inspiration to take the gospel to those who are in the darkness that hid them from the gospel. When you are down to four parishioners, it is important to ask them their needs so you can meet them. The church reoriented itself around mission. People want to be a member of institutions that will meet their needs. Gelder (2007) stated:

Communities are formed and sustained or not by their hermeneutics. Sometimes, humans want to impose their own will in the church. They forget if the church is from

God and then everyone must follow Christ commandments. Talking about the maturity of the community. (p. 95)

In my opinion, Jesus must be the center of all conversation, all activities, and all rules that regulate the community. Williamson and Allen (2008) went deeper by saying, “What churches should do [is] “build strong, challenging communities of faith, communities that will stretch and empower congregational members. Where this kind of congregation exists, participation in church life will itself be fascinating and satisfying” (p. 49). Strong communities require spirituality, faithfulness, fairness, and love for one another.

Wittberg (2012) explained that

the Christian religion, like the Christian God is essentially communal. Religious communities are where absorb, enact, and affirm who we are in relation to one another and to God. The earliest Christians, like their Jewish predecessors, believed that God did not save us as individuals but as members of a community, and the church continues to hold this doctrine. (p. 113)

The Church today needs disciples more than members. The thought of Conder (2006) expresses my understanding of the church of the living God:

Emerging churches are committed to a ‘rule of life’ that includes: the pursuit of the gospel expressed and explained in community, a passion for living out the values of Jesus' kingdom in the present, comfort with mystery and uncertainty, a spiritual holism that calls forth a radical and comprehensive discipleship, a reading of scripture that intersects with local stories and contexts, an experiential approach to both worship and the pursuit of truth and a ministry that honors the beauty of God's creation and the creative spirit found in humanity. (p. 25)

In Matt 28:19–20, Jesus declared:

Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold I am with you always to the end of the age.

According to the Great Commission, the whole world must be aware of the approaching end before the Second Coming of the Lord Jesus. It is obvious today that several people are left behind. Every church or institution should have plans to reach the forgotten.

Mission-Focused Stewardship and Small Groups

According to an Adventist magazine, small groups or home Bible fellowship scored 36% in evangelism, 24% in telephone contacts, 22% in public evangelistic meetings, 21% in health seminars and programs, 21% in other Bible seminars, 19% in Revelation seminars, 19% in giving one-to-one Bible studies, 19% in door-to-door contacts, 11% in Daniel seminars, 10% in family seminars, and 3% in literacy for adults or English as a second language. This article explains how Adventist members of North America do mission. A table is illustrated and, in that table, small groups or home Bible fellowship scored higher with 36% in evangelism. Thus, experiencing small groups in a church is beneficial for the spiritual and economic growth of the church.

Dudley and Gruesbeck (2015) said that

many members of large churches have lost their vision and concern for lost people. They often enjoy the opportunity of selecting friends from among a large group. Being part of a large group, they feel no need of extending their friendship to the unchurched. (p. 4)

One of the reasons why small groups are important is because most of the leaders in big churches have lost the initial vision of mission. They forget about those who stopped attending and they become comfortable. A lot of individuals do not have the opportunity of making friends in large congregations. Small groups become a great opportunity for individuals to do mission because they are small enough for everyone to know each other and bond. Bain (2014) discussed different phases of small groups:

1. Befriending (1–2 weeks): this is the first phase of the small groups where the members initiate their first conversation and are getting to know each other but they are still superficial.
2. Blending (3–4 weeks): in this phase, the members are identifying their connection points. This is the beginning of friendship.
3. Bending (5–7 weeks): discipleship and discipline, rules and core values are communicated.

4. Bonding (6–9 weeks): performance and open communication are demonstrated.
5. Bleeding (7–9 weeks): conflicts and resolution among the members of the group.
6. Mending (9–10 weeks): new beginning and spiritual growth are demonstrated.
7. Sending (9–10 weeks): this is the end of the cycle. This is an opportunity for the groups' members to share their emotions and new resolutions. (pp. 77–79)

My experience with small groups was not different from Thayer's (2010). One pastor who gave his personal testimony on the power of small groups said,

I had been out of the church, but I came back because of small groups. And the people in that small group developed me in my sense of calling, and I'm a pastor now because of that small group. But it is hard to get people interested in small groups. I'm afraid there is something drastic that is going to have to happen to get people to look at that paradigm. (p. 12)

Flake's model (as cited by Stetzer & Geiger, 2014) is quite simple:

1. Know the possibilities,
2. Enlarge the organization
3. Provide the space
4. Enlist and train the workers
5. Go after the people (p. 171).

A lot of people do not want to be a part of small groups. Small groups are not done by force. You have to examine the possibilities and resources to create the small group. This can enlarge the organization. The small group is preparation for evangelism. Not only will the number of members increase, but finances will also increase. It is also essential to get the youth involved.

Powell (2016) said that young people's energy attracts older adults with more financial resources, who, in turn, generously support the ministries of their church. Eventually, those young people also gain more vocational stability and can become part of their church's financial backbone

Searcy (2008) gave seven advantages of time-bound groups:

1. It has a clear beginning and end date,
2. It is easier for people to make short-term commitments,

3. It allows time for groups promotion and sign-ups,
4. It is easier for people to get into a group when everyone is starting at the same time,
5. There are more group options (new topics offered each semester),
6. It matches the academic year, and
7. It allows for the growth that comes through a stress-and-release cycle. (p. 33)

Small groups, mission, and stewardship go hand in hand. To accomplish the goals, we must first assess the needs of the church and find a strategy of what missionary tool would be best utilized. Small groups is number 1.

Correlation between Mission and Theory of Motivation

The theory of motivation presented by Maslow (1954) is a good framework that helps us understand how to keep individuals in the church while accomplishing the mission. Everything we do will be catastrophic without motivation. The real source of motivation comes from God. The mission, though very noble, needs preparation and consecration. Gelder (2007) believed that “mainline denominations will get better if they do things that fulfill their mission purpose within the framework of their long and well established and clearly articulated identities” (p. 95). When people love Jesus and they believe Jesus died for their salvation, they become disciples searching for disciples. There are people we do not minister to because they believe themselves to be invincible. This subject is something that all Christians should keep in mind and treat in the light of Scripture.

Correlation between Stewardship and Mission

There is a very good relationship between stewardship and mission if you believe God is your Lord and Creator, that you must obey Him, and that everything you are and everything you have belongs to God. A visible testimony of stewardship is being

passionate about the mission. Tizon (2016) had this prayer:

Lord, help us to remember that all that we have is yours. We commit not just what has been collected in these [offering] plates, but also what we've collected in our bank accounts, our homes, and our properties to your purposes and to your glory. Amen. (p. 13)

This prayer is a summary of the lordship of God over humanity.

The church should have people who commit their lives to God by searching for His guidance and power. The leaders of the church should also prepare seminars in order to teach and train anyone who is willing to participate in the program. Once any denomination is determined to go in that direction, Satan will oppose. He will start creating division or stand in the way in order to stop or slow down the movement, but if there is serious dedication, it will be carried out. Furthermore, it will result in success. Moreover, the best way to evangelize people in our community is to start observing the community around us, listen with our hearts and get involved in the activities where people need help.

Summary

In this chapter, we considered previous authors' work on mission-focused stewardship. After reading the opinions of other/previous authors, mission, stewardship, and mission-focused stewardship were defined. A brief examination of the Adventist organization was also discussed throughout the history of evangelism. Another item that was looked at was the mission statement of the different levels of hierarchy such as the local church, Conference, Union, Division, and General Conference. All of these entities are inspired to engage in their mission in different ways. They also have a common thread in winning souls. For this paper, the various Stewardship Departments were

contacted from each entity of the hierarchy. A lot of emphasis was placed on integration, lordship, and partnership with Jesus. Partnership means in no way cheating God, but rather, returning faithfully to Him what is rightfully His—the tithes and offerings. A relationship was established between mission-focused stewardship and small groups to show that it is an opportunity for church members to learn and grow. It is also a way for church members to regain their motivation in mission-focused stewardship. The mission is to win souls. Stewardship is the strategy to complete the mission. For example, a student wants to pass an exam. To pass, that student must study. Studying is the strategy while passing the exam is the goal or mission.

CHAPTER 4

DESCRIPTION OF THE INITIATIVE

Introduction

Stewardship is vital in the church and to individuals called in God's name. It is a personal and communal responsibility that is simple, yet complex, which most Christians so easily misunderstand. Its importance is that no Christian body or organization can function without it. According to Froom (1929), stewardship is not a theory nor a philosophy but a working program. Stewardship is, in verity, the Christian law of living. It is necessary for an adequate understanding of life and essential to a true, vital religious experience. It is not simply a matter of mental assent but is an act of the will and a definite, decisive transaction touching the whole perimeter of life.

When I was growing up, I was always enthralled by mission-focused stewardship and the vision of a church filled with the Holy Spirit that brought hope to the world. The reality of being among researchers in mission-focused stewardship is fulfilling a long-cherished dream. Once I became a graduate student, I knew, at last, that I had the opportunity to pay forward and do my part to contribute to the scholars' great work. When I attended classes, did assignments, and read books and articles written by researchers in the field, I felt ready to move forward in that great endeavor. While I learned the theories, principles, and tools that researchers need to do their work, I

believed I was equipped to serve effectively and put all I had learned into practice through my experience.

Overall Objective

The task of this project is to develop, implement, and evaluate a mission-focused stewardship plan for the Shiloh Bilingual French Seventh-day Adventist Church. This project would help them get back on track in the original spiritual status as good stewards. This chapter's objective is to outline the methods and strategies used to get the desired results in the chosen church sample. It was exciting and challenging. The report was exciting because there was so much learning involved, and the participants were very enthusiastic about the project. Overall, it was a wonderful experience. It was also challenging because the journey was long, data collection was time consuming, the rubric for research had to be respected, and Covid-19 changed the dynamics of the project since we could not meet in person. Various platforms such as Zoom and Facebook were utilized for meetings.

Background and Rationale

White (1946) said,

Those who bear the burden of the work in Greater New York should have the help of the best workers that can be secured. Here let a center for God's work is made and let all that is done be a symbol of the work the Lord desires to see done in the world. (p. 384)

As stated before, one can see that those who live in the city have become too engrossed in the matters of their daily lives and do not give the work of God the time and effort they deserve. It is obvious that the greater the city, the greater the challenge, so rather than reduce our efforts, we should increase them tenfold.

Shiloh Bilingual French Seventh-day Adventist Church is located in Canarsie, Brooklyn, New York. It is a church that is community-orientated and seeks to enhance the quality of people's lives through spiritual outreach. Based on my research, Canarsie, Kensington, East Flatbush, Flatbush, and Crown Heights have a significantly high concentration of West Indians such as Jamaicans, Haitians, and Guyanese. Brooklyn is the most famous borough in New York City and is the second largest in terms of size (World Population Review, 2021, 2022). The borough has approximately 2.6 million residents and is popularly known as the destination for immigrants in the United States. The racial and ethnic breakdown of Brooklyn was White, 49.5%; non-Hispanic, 35.8%; African American, 35.8%; Asian, 11.3%; Native American, 1.0%; Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander, 0.1%; two or more races, 2.2%; other races, 8.9%; and Hispanic or Latino of any race, 19.8% (2010 Census). Brooklyn has a high female-to-male ratio with 100 males for every 88 males. It also has the most prominent lesbian community of any New York City borough.

In the borough, French Creole scored 2.75% and French scored 1%. A new survey (Green, 2016) suggests that the logistics of going to services can be the most significant barrier to participation—and Americans' faith in religious institutions is declining. As the United States became secular with time, people slowly began drifting away from the faith. Another 50% said they stopped believing in the tenets of the religion they were raised in.

The Borough of Brooklyn is a flourishing garden that Shiloh Bilingual church has taken advantage of. The services are conducted in English and French Creole that made it easy for the church to reach the community. Through sound leadership and putting God

first, a spirit of loyalty and unity among members has encouraged sharing and looking out for each other regardless of background. A church with a mission-focused agenda can bring more people closer to God. Stewardship is a collective responsibility for all Christians to help empower each other and non-Christians concerning the mission of Christ. Christ relies on human beings to help make disciples worldwide; this role cannot be entirely placed on church leaders. In the research conducted at Shiloh Bilingual, leaders trained members to cultivate their different talents and abilities as Christians and be productive in fulfilling Christ's work on earth as we wait for His second coming.

Description of the Initiative

Based on the context, the theological reflection, and the literature review, the initiative will be presented in four phases as follows: Phase one is about the mission-focused stewardship sounding board; Phase two is about the mission-focused stewardship awareness movement; the third phase is about conducting mission-focused stewardship seminars; and the fourth phase deals with mission-focused stewardship peer support groups/mentoring.

Phase One: Mission-Focused Stewardship Sounding Board

According to Webster (1928), a sounding board is "a person or group on whom one tries out an idea or opinion as a means of evaluating it." The sounding board group helps outline the purpose of the research. It is vital to have a team that will shed light, point out areas that might go unnoticed, and help develop a strategy to carry out the research to steer the project. The mission will be successful and significant to the church's growth with an outlined agenda and a spiritually led team.

Strategy for Phase 1: A diverse group of eight people, including men, women, young adults, and seniors, was appointed as a sounding board to help me design, implement, and evaluate the project. The sounding board was exposed to a model of mission-focused stewardship practitioners to assist better in the project implementation. In six months, I met with them six times. A working plan was prepared to set goals related to specific attainments, understandings, or different qualities of individual experiences. These goals typically involve the challenge and commitment dimensions. Locke and Latham said that challenging goals relate to feedback in two significant ways (as cited in Hattie & Timperley, 2007).

They inform individuals of the type or level of attainable performance to direct and evaluate their actions and efforts accordingly. Feedback allows individuals to set reasonable goals and keep track of their performance regarding their goals and make necessary adjustments in their efforts, direction, and even strategy (p. 23). A steward handling God's business or possessions is expected to perform according to God's liking. The sounding board was expected to work towards a plan to attain the project's goal and portray God's love and expectations from Christians.

The mission-orientated sounding board is an excellent platform for sharing information and empowering one another. A well-orchestrated plan can guide the researcher and provide a wider scope on areas that could not be handled by an individual and exploits all disposed of regions and strategies. The board also instills a sense of accountability and responsibility to everyone, making the research more bearable and easier to carry out.

Phase Two: Mission-Focused Stewardship Awareness Movement

Webster (1928) defined awareness as the quality or state of being aware; knowledge and understanding that something is happening or exists. Raising mission-focused stewardship awareness was a movement put in place for the growth of the church, which embodies self-awareness. The more conscious we are of ourselves, the more productive we become at the tasks at hand. It is to sensitize one's conscience to understand the nature of a God who is committed to His mission. God has provided a participative method based on His character, whereby He implores His people to be missional and sacrificial. The awareness movement is very vital to the church's growth. Without the awareness of the church, it is almost impossible to have the church standing as a community rather than as the building itself. The church must ensure that everyone clearly understands the importance of mindful movement through actions. The church is entirely responsible for the accommodation of growth in the event of the addition or loss of members. According to the quality characteristics, the number of attendees in the church has grown over the past five years. The awareness movements should cater to these growths over the years, and improvement of the exercise is consistent; otherwise, the statistical results would be the opposite.

Strategy for Phase 2: A survey was prepared that would measure the attitude toward mission-focused stewardship of the Shiloh Bilingual French SDA members. It was a mixed-methods study targeting the mission and financial growth of the identified church. The strategies that were used to enhance the mindfulness movement were as follows:

1. Identification of issues and making them clear
2. Events (what, why, how, when, where, who)
3. Identification of resources (and partners)
4. Business meeting in the church
5. Creation of promotional materials
6. Visitation to help members understand the idea of the movement
7. Setting up measurable goals

According to NCD (2001), the quality of the health of the church marks its growth, not the number of members. The church is ideally a “living organism” that needs spiritual growth to be functional. The church primarily needs to be nurtured and grown. In the church, most people get refuge and help concerning community and personal issues. Mindfulness programs in the church have been essential for community growth and have proved effective in most cases.

The mission-focused stewardship mindfulness movement is a critical strategy in the church that, upon implementation, will generally guarantee a progressive improvement of the church. A faithful church is most certainly a healthy church and pleases the Lord.

Phase Three: Conducting Mission-Focused Stewardship Seminars

This phase was a series of meetings that give information in a discussion format. Egli and Marable (2011) explained how conducting seminars is one the primary ways the organization used to form human resources and train for high performance. Seminars are convenient for the spiritual growth of the church. Seminars conducted by prayerful

leaders are full of God's presence and where attending members get to be empowered and feel genuine care for each other and their leaders. Seminars are joyful, and the agendas are led by the Spirit, not man's understanding. My experience at Shiloh Bilingual was not different because, after the seminars, the members got a better sense of mission-focused stewardship and were motivated to collaborate for a better outcome. I have gained a lot from attending seminars so far, and my social circles grow through these planned events where we not only go to meet new people, but also gain spiritual experience and knowledge. Maintaining the culture of setting up seminars for our churches is imperative as it contributes to the church's growth quantitatively and spiritually. The different quality characteristics are implemented and fostered through these seminars, promoting healthy growth in our churches.

Strategy for Phase 3: Here are some topics developed in these series: servant leadership, how to pray effectively, mission of the church, NCD, seeing Shiloh in context, theological foundation of mission-focused stewardship, ministering during a pandemic, reforming the spirituality of the church, church's business, dynamics of congregational life, ongoing coaching, members' retention, Maxlife, culture identity of the church, and church growth.

The members involved in this project were very responsive, gave feedback, and considered the process very meaningful to the health of the church and their personal spiritual growth. Fifty percent of the members stated that NCD was new to them and thus, it was a blessing that they were a part of the project. All the seminars were well presented, and 85% of the church members were excited and eager to serve. There were fliers posted on social media and in the church bulletin to invite not only the church

members, but also all the community to participate.

According to White (1855), all who believe in God are tested through the gifts entrusted to them. Christians must be God's stewards here on earth and are tasked with goods and possessions, assets, wealth, skills, and talents to advance God's work. She also emphasized the fact that stewards identify themselves with their master and accept in obedience all the responsibilities a steward is called upon to do by the master. The Master, in this case, God, urges that every soul called by His name shun selfish ways and refrain from using God's goods to his advantage because by doing this, the trust between the Master and the steward is broken.

Phase Four: Mission-Focused Stewardship Peer Support Groups/Mentoring

Small groups are the best place for church members to learn and grow. In these groups, being oneself and open to others is easy. The Scripture is well broken down and understood in small holistic groups where individuals get to engage and share their views and perspectives. In these small groups, individuals also form prayer cells and teams that assign spiritual or prayer partners, which significantly fosters spiritual growth. These groups benefit the church's young members as they grow in environments that require spiritual growth and principles to overcome influence and temptations. Older members also benefit significantly from the support groups as they can share their life experiences and avoid mental issues of having to bear or handle burdens alone.

The effectiveness of these small groups dramatically contributes to the church's growth in quality and quantity. Many members have joined the church through small groups just by influence and observation of the wonders God works through these groups.

Testimonies of such occurrences are common in our communities and continue to increase over time. Peer support groups are used as an intervention strategy in helping church members get a clear idea of the essence of mission-focused stewardship. Small peer support groups also reflect various benefits of an in-depth, authentic community since people live together in a closely-knit group. The task, the mentor, and the meeting models were worked on.

Strategy for Phase 4: Five small groups were formed to implement the project according to the demographic of the church: group 1 (16–30) years old, group 2 (31–40), group 3 (41–50), group 4 (51–60), and group 5 (61 and up). The peer groups were mobilized weekly in the three stages of the process: sow, cultivate, and harvest. The peer groups were evaluated every month and considered their three objectives: feed, train, and send. The peer groups were comprised of a leader, a secretary, and the members. Their roles were as follows:

1. The leader prepared the meetings and guided his/her members to accomplish the mission of Christ.
2. The secretary was responsible for noting all the activities of the peer group.
3. The members were responsible for participating actively in the weekly meeting and follow the discipleship program.

According to Egli and Marable (2011), there are three dynamics of small group growth: assimilation, group multiplication, and conversion growth. The dynamics do not correlate with each other since either it is bound to fail while the others succeed. It requires consistency and determination for all three dynamics to succeed simultaneously, but in most cases, it hardly happens. For a small group to grow and eventually produce

other smaller groups and bring more people to Christ requires the same factors, regardless of the participants or their demographic characteristics. Such factors include prayer, spending time together, planning and participating in fun activities, identifying and utilizing potential leaders, and spending more time with God. In their research, Egli and Marable (2011) concluded that the predetermined traits of a leader do not determine the success of a small group. The group leader must look to God for guidance and reach out to the group members in caring ways.

Research Design

The research design is meant to create an overall strategy that integrates its different phases in a logical context. This study follows the action research paradigm in which the researcher strives to resolve a practical problem as he conducts the exploration.

Methodology

I used a mixed method approach that included quantitative and qualitative techniques, also called triangulation. The purpose of the quantitative and qualitative techniques was to attain greater knowledge and understanding of the Shiloh Bilingual spiritual status, how the members could become good stewards, how the stewardship aspect of their lives could coordinate and relate to the mission, and how they would like to be involved. In this project, the quantitative tool used was the NCD Questionnaire. The qualitative tools used were the focus groups and the unstructured interviews which are a data collection method that relies on asking participants questions to collect data on a topic.

Sampling Method

This study was conducted at the Shiloh Bilingual French in Brooklyn, NY. This church has a membership of 200 people and 80 active members. The sample was a group of 50 volunteers chosen randomly and divided into 5 small groups. Only 5 small groups were formed that made a total of 50 people for the implementation. The sample included three categories of participants: those who took the NCD, those who filled out the questionnaire, and those who participated in the interview.

Measurement and Validity

In this experience, we have used some of the most renowned tools previously used by other churches (e.g., NCD, the Mission-Focused Stewardship Questionnaire, and interviews). When I considered NCD, it was strongly recommended in our community because of its standards and the remarkable results most have accomplished when it has been utilized. It is known worldwide. I had the opportunity to use it in one of my churches and was satisfied with the results achieved, which gave me the confidence to progress with it. According to Middleton (2019), validity refers to how accurately a method measures what it is intended to measure. Research with high validity produces results corresponding to fundamental properties, characteristics, and variations in the physical or social world (Middleton, 2019). My tools helped me attain reliable results during my research, which allowed the church and the community to prove their reliability. For the questionnaire, after working on the various inquiries, I submitted it to IRB Committee at Andrews University for approval. After it had been reviewed, I received confirmation that it had been approved, but it but was not tested.

Detailed Study Procedures

The NCD Initiative was a survey I gave to the Shiloh Bilingual French SDA Church to help improve the church's effectiveness. The project was presented to the whole church, and I asked for volunteers. The church clerk assisted in selecting the participants on a first come, first served basis. The church clerk distributed the surveys in my absence. The NCD survey was ordered through the North American Division (NAD) Evangelism Institute and was received via email by the church clerk. Upon receiving the study, 30 individuals were chosen to participate because they varied in age and gender, a criterion necessary for collecting variable data and opinions. After receiving the participants' consent, the Clerk sent emails to them with a unique link. The questionnaire was filled out electronically by them at that very moment. The NAD Evangelism Institute was notified when all the participants had completed the survey. They emailed the survey results to the clerk, who then forwarded them to me for interpretation.

The Mission-Focused Stewardship Questionnaire was the second tool utilized to monitor the progress of the church, as well as its efficacy. I had chosen five small groups with different age ranges; the questions were tailored to determine how they returned tithes and offerings. They were unanimous, and I prepared the survey from Google documents which were how I arrived at the results. A link was sent to their phone numbers or emails, and participants would answer freely according to their norms without any pressure or influence from others.

Finally, I used random individuals in the interview process; some I visited at their homes or via phone, and some I met at the church in my office. I was not limited in my approach to getting as many people involved during that time. I must also add that some

of the participants shared some thought-provoking ideas with me and I had their permission to integrate those ideas into the questionnaire.

Results

The 50 participants were all from different age ranges, most males. They were all members of the Shiloh Seventh-day Adventist Church. All the participants believed in supporting the work of God through tithes and offerings. The participants all worked for their income and earned above \$2000 per month. From the responses, all the participants adhered to the 10% directive of tithing. The participants agreed to involve God as a partner in their lives because He is our Creator, Sustainer, and Redeemer. The participants all agreed that it was essential to return tithes and give offerings systematically and believed that it was a way of being faithful to God and a way of worship. The data collected during this research was presented to the church for analysis of the results according to NCD guidelines.

The results of my research were successfully obtained. In the questionnaire, the group selected was presented with 21 questions. There were 50 participants, and they all ranged from 23 to 67 years of age. The questionnaire helped to find out the average gender distribution of the church members and to get reviews of their experience in the Shiloh Seventh-Day Adventist Church. The assessment results are attached in the document.

Summary

For many years, some church members left, and others lost their zeal for the mission. This research project was an opportunity for the church to uncover significant

barriers affecting the church's progress and spiritual growth. Here is the lesson from phase one in the focused stewardship sounding board. When the eight people met with me, they gave me feedback which was constructive because it helped me analyze different areas where I could improve and various topics that I should or could address to be more successful. I was very open to feedback, which increased my performance success. Phase two took me a lot of time and energy. The members eventually became more comfortable with me and could give me feedback. This was not only in the preparation stage, but also in the survey design, visits, promotions, business meetings, goal setting, and event planning. These different stages helped to build a deeper rapport and relationship with the members.

These stages were crucial because they allowed them to reflect on their spirituality, the current realities of the church, and the ministry that God has called us to participate in. This section required a lot of prayer and fasting. This phase required putting my heart, mind, body, and soul into action. This exercise is implemented for the church's growth, which embodies self-awareness. I believe that the more conscious we are of ourselves, the more effective we become at the tasks. This exercise will help church members identify their talents, passion, interests, and spiritual gifts.

Phase 3 taught me that not everyone is interested in ministry even though they might be in the church. The seminars must be captivating and exciting. If they are boring, the members lose interest. Seminars are the icing on the cake. Building and nurturing relationships are the priority.

Phase 4 was about mission-focused support groups and mentoring. When individuals join a small group, they become part of a family where they eat together,

study the Bible, and socialize. This is crucial because the group gives its members a sense of belonging. It is also a safe space for individuals to express their emotions and opinions. Another reason why this is essential is that everyone can identify his/her needs, and there is a strong possibility that those needs can be met. Small groups also aid in increasing the number of baptisms and the congregation's spiritual growth.

Church members must be trained to use their talents, gifts, and abilities to fulfill their Christian purpose in carrying out the church's mission while connecting and sharing with others. Leaders are encouraged to strengthen and cultivate a spirit of loyalty among all the members. These individuals will consider that faithfully returning their tithe and giving offerings is a part of their lives that are transformed through. We identified the process of the work, the type of community, the goals, and how the work was fulfilled. We also discussed research design, sample size, measurement tool, study tools, validity, results, and data analysis. All these categories were used to conduct this research at an academic level.

The church's effectiveness was measured by both character and actions of its community and reflection of the outreach intentions (Rumley, 2011). Evaluation of the plan was necessary after researching it as it showed the process and progress of the research experience. Evaluation provided an avenue to reflect on the whole process and identify whether there were any further adjustments or considerations that had been left out. It was imperative to be honest in the evaluation process since it measured the improvement and progress of the church. The questionnaire helped me know the members' stand on tithe and offerings and how the average number of members returned

their tithe and gave offerings. The assessment instilled a sense of accountability to the church.

With the peer groups, it was easy to find motivation through discussions on matters of importance concerning tithes and offerings. Through testimonies, members who do not believe in giving and honoring God through tithe may have a change of heart. The leaders can use the seminar programs to explain the importance of tithe and offering. Through Bible study, members can refer to the occasions where God was honored and dishonored through tithes and offerings. Through giving, we share Christ according to Deut 14:22; Gen 28:22; 2 Cor 9:5–7; and Mal 3:8–10, among others. We store our riches in heaven through giving here on earth as Christians. Through prayer and studying the Word, we, as Christians, can discover ways to honor and worship God in truth and Spirit and gain God's blessings. Christians should please God and be content with the results because there is ideally no more incredible feeling than knowing that God is happy with us. God's reward results from proper stewardship on earth and is influenced chiefly by our commitment, contentment, and strength in the Christian faith.

CHAPTER 5

RESULTS FROM IMPLEMENTING THE MISSION

FOCUS STEWARDSHIP PLAN

Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to present the narrative of the result of the project. I had the privilege of working with the church members and leaders to accomplish that task. It was a remarkably interesting experience. The members had the opportunity to participate and provide feedback. I had the opportunity to form five small groups and we worked together for 25 weeks. They shared their experiences, and we gave them a survey. I will share the results of that survey later on in this chapter. Each activity (as mentioned in this chapter), was announced three weeks in advance and the information was put in the church bulletin. A flyer was also designed and posted on various platforms. We sent out a mass text to members as a reminder. Church members collaborated and invited family members and friends, and the daily attendance was 80% of the active members on the church records.

As I mentioned in chapter 4, based on the context, the theological reflection, and the literature review, the initiative was presented in five phases: mission-focused stewardship sounding board, mission-focused stewardship mindfulness movement, conducting mission-focused stewardship seminars, mission-focused stewardship peer

support groups/mentoring, and evaluation. The implementation of those phases was done as follows.

Forming a sounding board was the first phase to implementing the project. The sounding board met to prepare a working plan with goals that related to specific attainments or understandings or to differing qualities of experience. They typically involved two dimensions: challenges and commitment which will be explained more in this chapter. To have a better picture of what they were doing, the sounding board was exposed to a few mission-focused stewardship practitioners so they could assist better in the implementation of the project.

Mission-Focused Stewardship Mindfulness Movement

Two surveys were administered with the support of the sounding board, The NCD survey was ordered and administered to 30 random individuals. Following the protocol of Chapter 4, the questionnaire was filled out electronically by 50 participants at that very moment. The survey results were emailed to the researcher for interpretation.

Results

After analyzing the results of the survey, I identified issues and made them clear in order to promote the mindfulness movement. According to Figure 1, Shiloh Bilingual scored low in three factors: empowering leadership (49), holistic small groups (39), and loving relationships (52).



Natural Church Development *profile*

of Shiloh Bilingual French SDA

April -2021

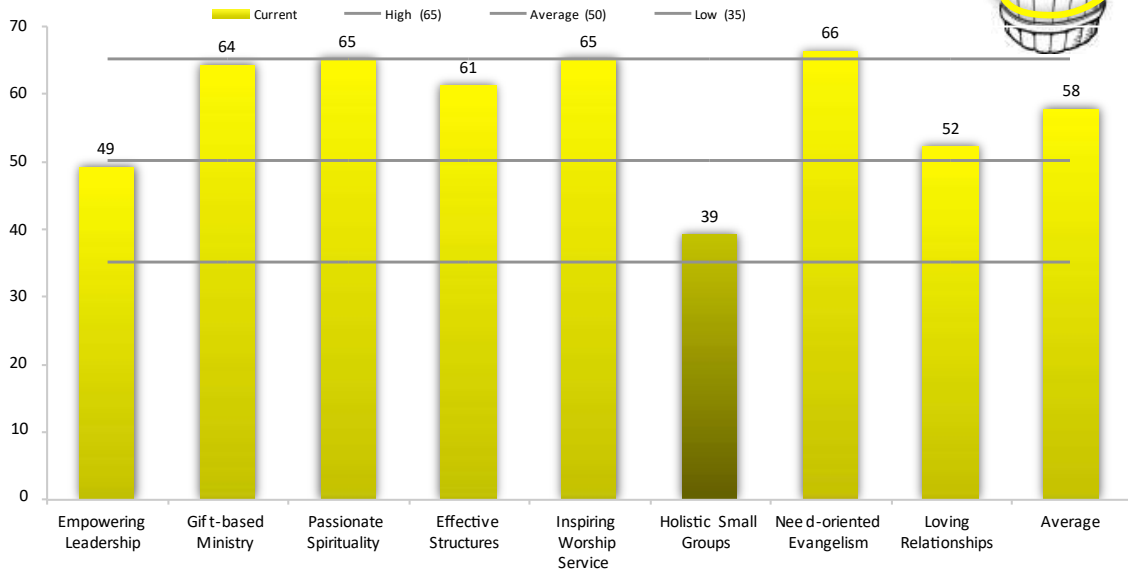
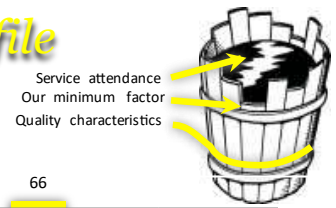


Figure 1. Natural church development profile.

Empowering Leadership

According to Burrill and Evans (2014), the average score for Adventist churches in the category of empowering leadership is 50.2. This is the fourth highest average of the eight quality characteristics. Thus, if your church scores above 50 in this characteristic, it is doing better than most Adventist churches surveyed. Churches scoring high in empowering leadership have a shared approach to ministry. There is a sense of teamwork and creativity. Churches scoring low in empowering leadership deal with many control issues in the church. Power and position are highly emphasized (pp. 23, 24, 28, 29).

Holistic Small Groups

Unfortunately, according to Burrill and Evans (2014), as measured in the survey, holistic small groups is the characteristic in which Adventist churches score the lowest, averaging only 46.5 (p. 68). Churches scoring high in holistic small groups are concerned about ministering to the entire person, which includes their emotional and physical needs. Churches scoring low in holistic small groups typically focus on head knowledge and tend to be out of touch regarding the real-life challenges members and guests face (pp. 63, 64, 68).

Loving Relationships

According to Burrill and Evans (2014), with an average score of 47.9, loving relationships ranks sixth in the Adventist churches surveyed. The two lowest questions on the entire survey came from the category of loving relationships. “I can rely on my friends at church (average 40) in our church, it is possible to talk with the other people about personal problems” (average 40). Churches scoring high in loving relationships have a welcome atmosphere that embraces members and guests alike. There are many fellowship opportunities provided on Sabbath and throughout the week. Churches scoring low in loving relationships often have cliques and tensions between members in the church. Rules are emphasized over relationships. Newcomers can be uncertain how they fit in (pp. 77, 78, 81).

Identify Resources (and Partners)

Shiloh Bilingual is dominantly composed with young adults and professionals. They are talented and full of energy. As we can see in Table 1, Shiloh scored high in gift-

based ministry (64), passionate spirituality (65), effective structures (61), inspiring worship service (65), and need-oriented evangelism (66); the average was 58.

In a business meeting, the church members expressed satisfaction in church growth and a boost in offering and church attendance. Business meetings in the church are held every six months to keep the church notified about finances and department progress and challenges. This is also a way to stay on task with the church vision and annual goals.

Talking to people one-on-one is more effective than seminars. People can express themselves and share this testimony because a sense of trust has been established.

Visitation is done to help members understand. During the pandemic, it was extremely difficult to have visitation, but we found a way to visit members safely. At the beginning of the pandemic, each board member had two people to call. When it started being safe to visit again, the pastoral staff divided the church roster in four parts, and each elder was assigned a group. The visits were held outdoors using social distancing. Utilizing the food pantry, we were able to take some nonperishable items. During this visit we prayed and had some discussions about spirituality.

Conducting Mission-Focused Stewardship Seminars

Leaders' Presentations

The seminars were conducted on Zoom and the Sabbath School Director, who is also the Communications Director, was in charge of organizing, controlling, and hosting the Zoom meetings. One person was designated to lead in all the sessions. The seminars were always presented on Zoom after the prayer sessions using PowerPoint. After the seminars, question and reflections were addressed. The seminars had two objectives: (a)

understanding Christian mission-focused stewardship in depth and (b) discovering and practicing the secrets of becoming a perfect mission-focused steward.

In those seminars, I developed what Christian stewardship is and I presented Christian stewardship as a way of life which develops and flourishes in all its spheres of activity in the life of the Christian. The ramifications of this increase are unlimited, and the steps come from the Bible. I also spoke about the seven strong pillars of stewardship: three concerning perfection of God and for human perfection. These are as follows:

1. Temple. Our body is the temple of the Holy Spirit. (1 Cor 6:19–20).
2. Time. Our time must be managed wisely (Eph 5:16).
3. Talents. Our talents must be placed at the service of God and of the community (Eph 4:11–16).
4. Testimonies. Our testimonies should reflect the glory of the God we serve (2 Pet 2:9–12).
5. Service. Our service must be available to everyone (Gal 5:13).
6. Trust. We must put our trust in God (Exod 14:14).
7. Treasure. Our treasure is in the bank in heaven (Matthew 6:21).

Management of the treasure and its two parts (tithes and offerings) were addressed, as well as the role of the Holy Spirit in mission-focused stewardship. The survey on Christian Stewardship was administered to Shiloh Bilingual French SDA Church after the presentation of the seminar.

Participants' Responses

The seminars were thorough and there were a lot of debates on the different topics presented. The discussion took a turn when discussing whether tithe should be taken from

gross or net pay. Through the presentations, the participants decided to return their tithes and offerings from gross pay. There was also a discussion on offering because many members used to return and tithe and neglect offering. For example, a participant testified that she has systematically returned her tithe, but when it comes to offering, she just gave a few coins. She added that after the seminars, she became mindful in how she was returning the offering because without the offering, the local church is struggling in fulfilling its mission. After the seminars, other participants understood the importance of returning both tithe and offering systematically and started to become faithful again.

Mission-Focused Stewardship Peer Support Groups/Mentoring

Statistical Goals and Procedures

The peer support groups were used as the intervention strategy that helped members have more light on mission-focused stewardship. The peer support groups also reflected the benefits of in-depth, genuine community as members live life together in a close-knit group. It was a group (from 3 to 12 people) where exchanges took place face-to-face; each person could communicate with the others without going through an intermediary.

Figure 2 describes the small groups and shows how many members, meetings, and visitors there were. As we can see from Figure 2, the numbers in each group are different. They did not have the same number of members, visitors, or meetings. Every member of each group was a volunteer. The meetings for each group took place during a period of seminars explaining the dynamics of small groups. One of the main goals everyone had in common was to have as many visitors as possible, but because of Covid,

it was very difficult. I used these groups of people to get my results. These groups were the main focus of my study. They shared great feedback. From this study, I now know that more people need to be educated on stewardship and how to apply it to our daily lives.

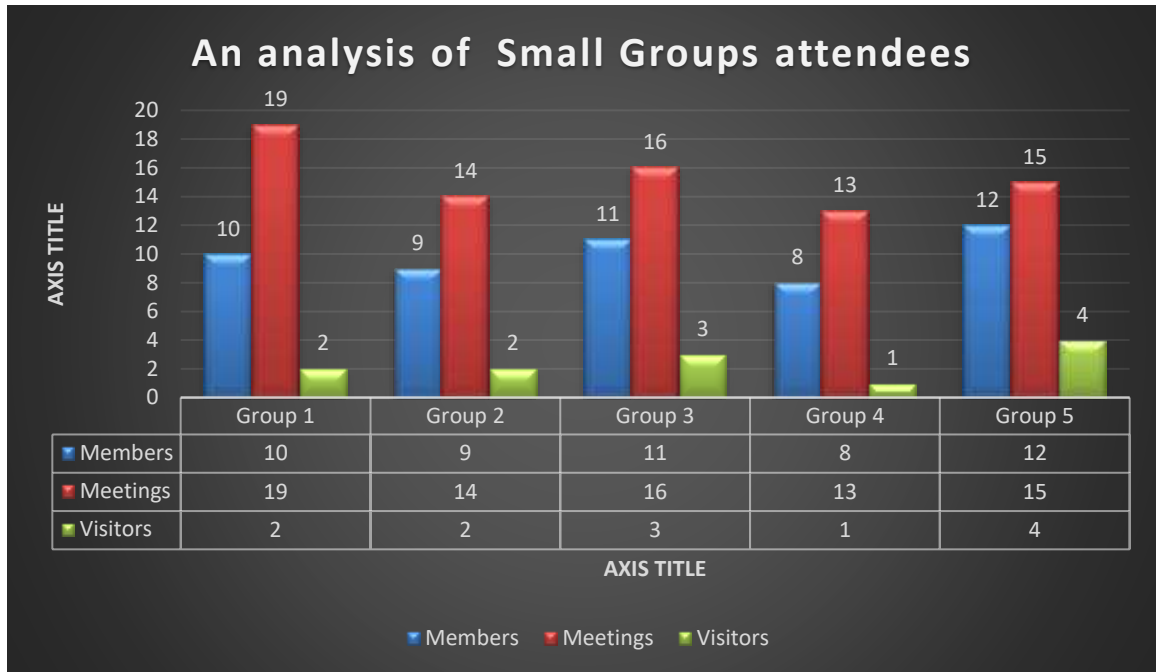


Figure 2. Analysis of small group attendees.

I was able to set up measurable goals. My goal was to emphasize our purpose as a mission-focused stewardship church, encourage the members to be a community of belonging, and help church members become missional. Figure 3 explains the goals and how they were achieved. The goals were as follows:

1. Make each member of a peer group a competent disciple.
2. Let each member of the peer group take care of four people with whom they study the Bible on an ongoing basis.

3. Encourage each member of the peer group to have new disciples be baptized.

Figure 3 shows the results of the three goals. Goal number one was almost achieved: a 9 out of 10 success. The second goal was partially achieved. It wasn't easy to continue an ongoing study because of Covid. Numerous individuals were sick or had to quarantine. Even though we were at home, people were still busy working from home or doing school virtually. The third goal was not achieved. The third goal was also affected by the pandemic because many people were afraid of coming into contact with others because they did not want to be infected by Covid.

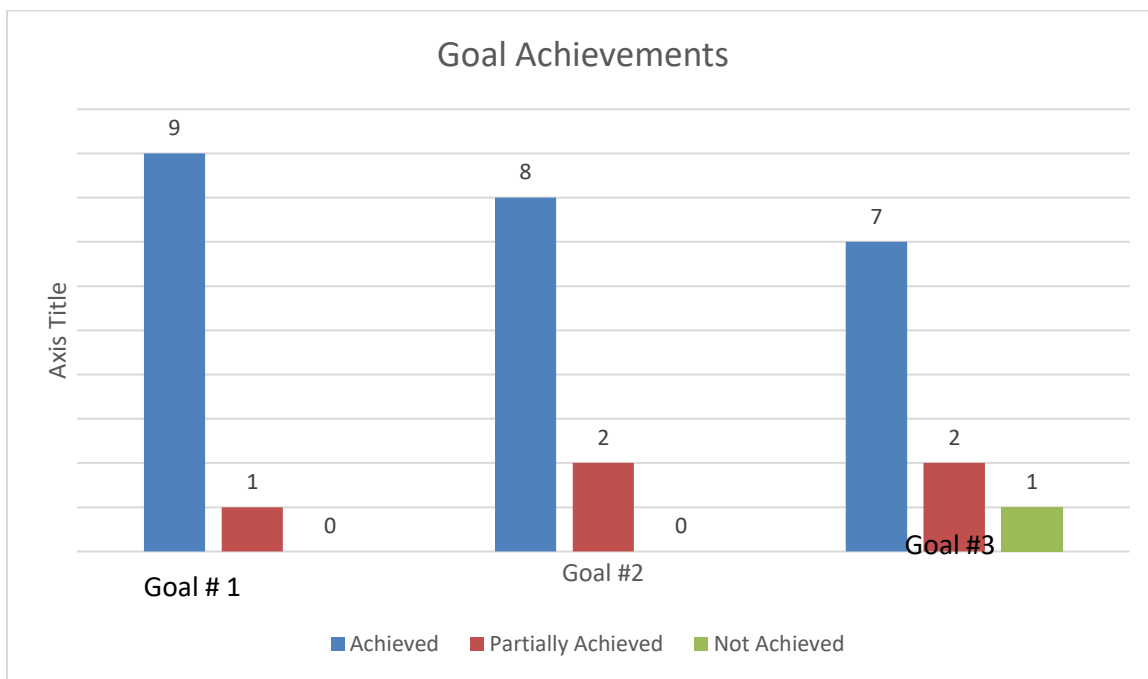


Figure 3. Goal achievements.

The peer groups were mobilized weekly in the three stages of the process: sow, cultivate, and harvest. The peer groups were evaluated every month and considered the three objectives of the peer groups: feed, train, and send.

Objectives and Statistics for Groups

The objectives of the peer groups were as follows:

1. Feed: Give each member the nutrients necessary for their spiritual development (dimensions of life, mind, sociability, and spirituality).
2. Train: Give each member the necessary tools to effectively accomplish the mission of Christ (sow, cultivate, and reap).
3. Send: Give each member the opportunity to bear witness to the love of God among his *oikos* (family members, friends, neighbors, relations, and others). The peer groups were also an opportunity to satisfy the vital needs of being disciples: (food, shelter, clothing, and work, reading, studying, good human relations, spiritual meditation and Scripture study, prayer, attendance at church services, missionary work, tithing, and offerings).

Figure 4 shows peer group one, ages 16–30. There were more females than males in this group. The whole group believed in stewardship. Thirty three percent of the group returned tithe on their gross income, while 60% of the group did so on the net. The whole group of 16-30 believed in paying tithe systematically. This group was the youngest group to participate in the study. They were all technologically knowledgeable. One thing that I learned about the youngest group was that the easiest way to connect with them was through technology by creating a Facebook page and utilizing Zoom for meetings. I also learned the importance of putting our young people in leadership because they are responsible and well organized.

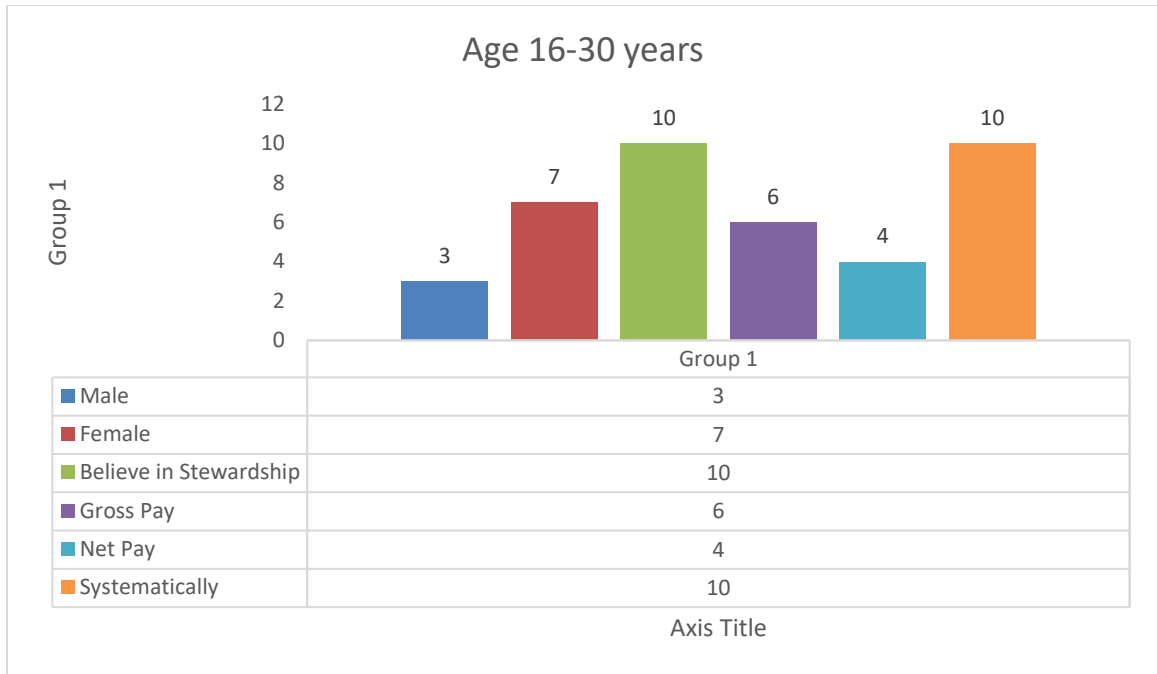


Figure 4. Age grouping of peer group one.

Figure 5 shows group 2, ages 31–40. This group had more females than males. This group also strongly believed in returning tithe systemically. They also returned tithe on net income, not on the gross. This group was the working professionals. The results for this group were not too different from the previous group, although I expected the majority of this group to return tithe on the gross.

Group 3, as shown in Figure 6, was ages 41–50. This group consisted of 12 individuals. They all believed in stewardship. This group also had more females than males. Ninety-one percent of the group believed in returning tithe systemically. They also had more individuals returning tithe on their net income rather than on the gross. They were working professionals, as well. Most of the people in this group expressed the fact that they had more expenses and more responsibilities, so they returned their tithe from their net pay since they were struggling with bills.

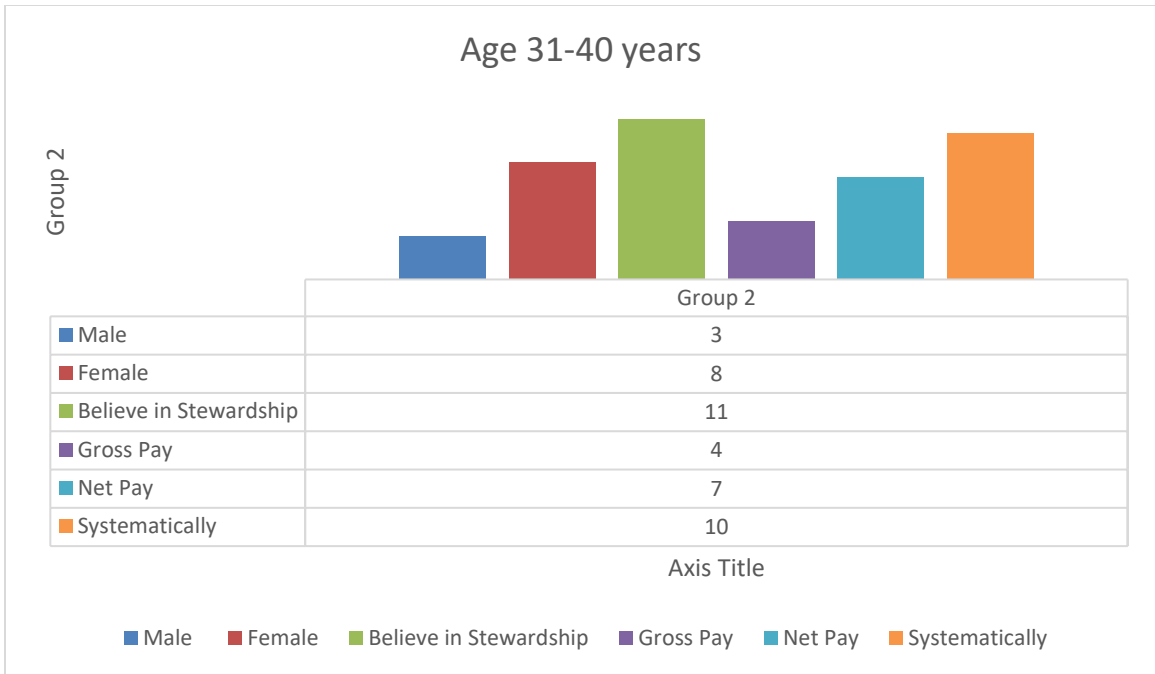


Figure 5. Age grouping of peer group two.

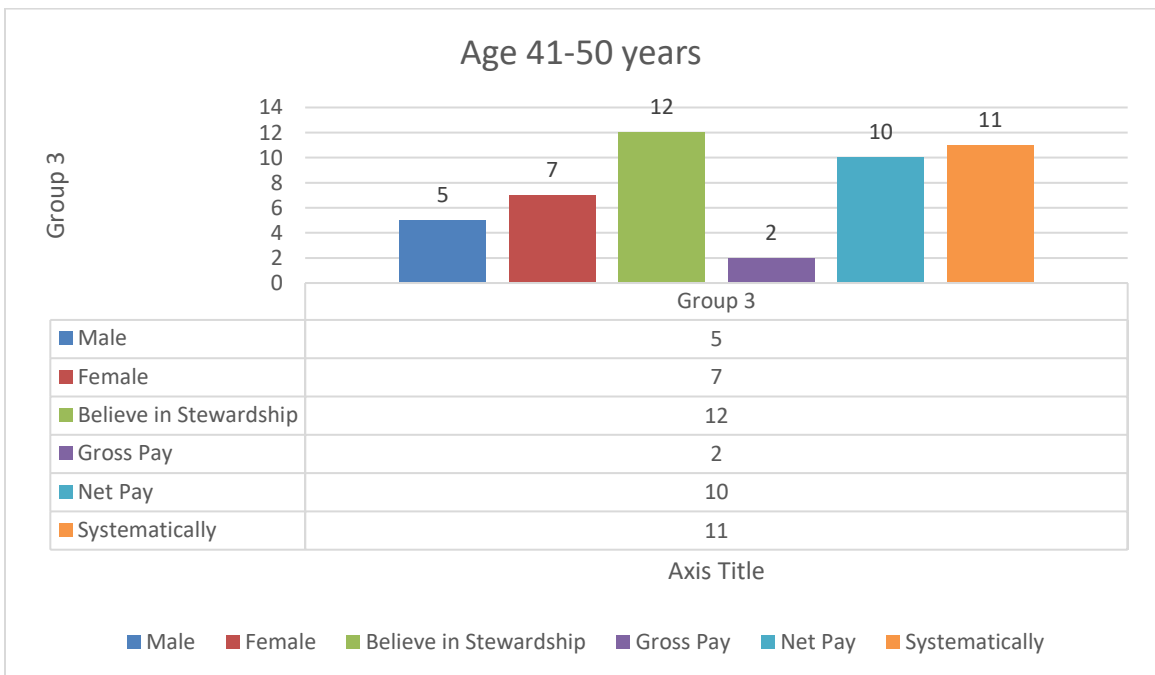


Figure 6. Age grouping of peer group three.

Figure 7 shows group 4, ages 51–60. This group consisted of 8 people, also including more females than males. The entire group believed in stewardship. Seventy-five percent of the group believed in returning tithe systematically. Twelve-point five percent returned their time from gross income, while 75% did so on the net. When we compared the previous groups with this one, they were struggling with returning tithes and offerings on their gross income. I believe we should change the way we are teaching stewardship.

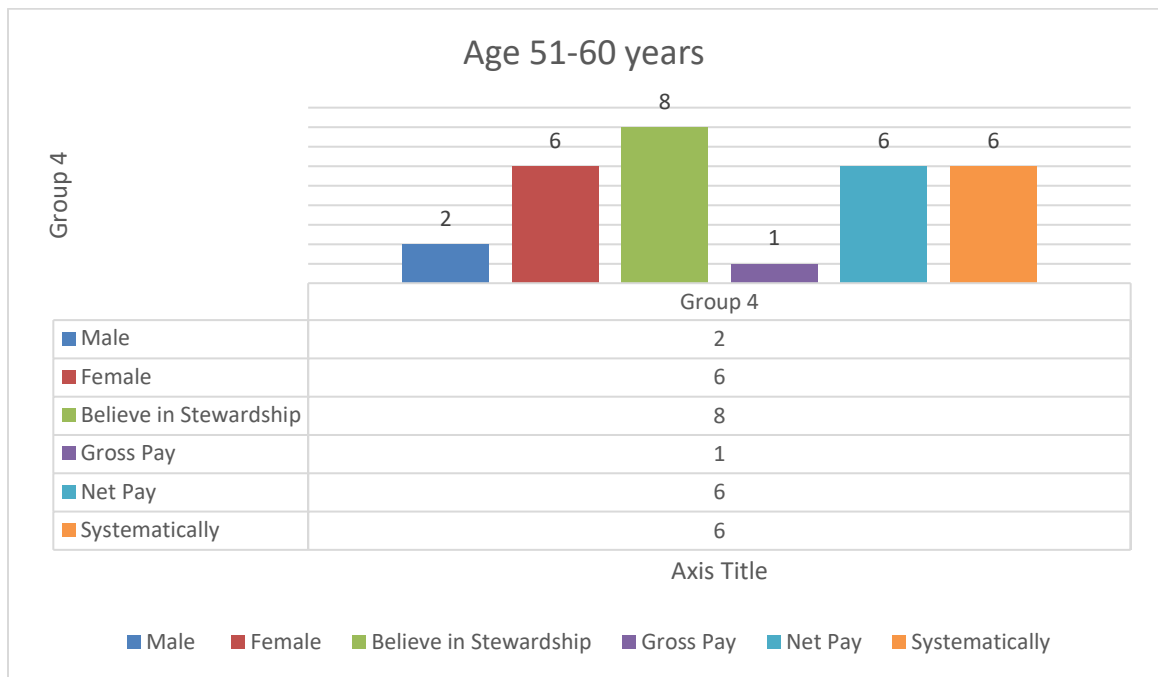


Figure 7. Age grouping of peer group four.

Figure 8 shows group 5, ages 60 and above. This group also had more females than males. They also believed strongly in stewardship. Just as the previous charts show, more people were returning tithe from net rather than gross income. This was the oldest group and very different from the first group. The two groups were different generations.

This group was attached to old traditions and were not comfortable with technology. This group was not in a rush to complete the survey; they took their time analyzing the process.

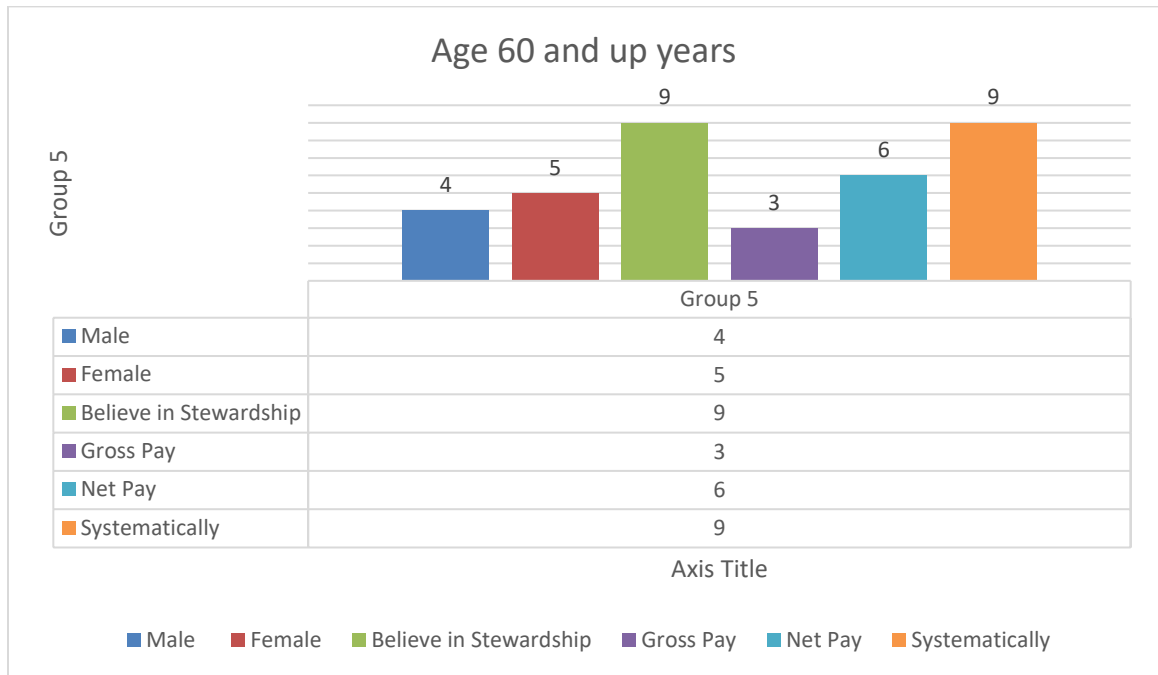


Figure 8. Age grouping of peer group five.

Figure 9 shows a comparison of the 5 groups. Every group was represented by a color. Group 1 was dark blue, group 2 was orange, group 3 was grey, group 4 was yellow, and group 5 was light blue. Everyone in all the groups believed in stewardship. The disparity arose when we came to the topic of gross pay and net pay. For the topic of systematic giving, the numbers varied from very low in group 5 and very high in group 4.

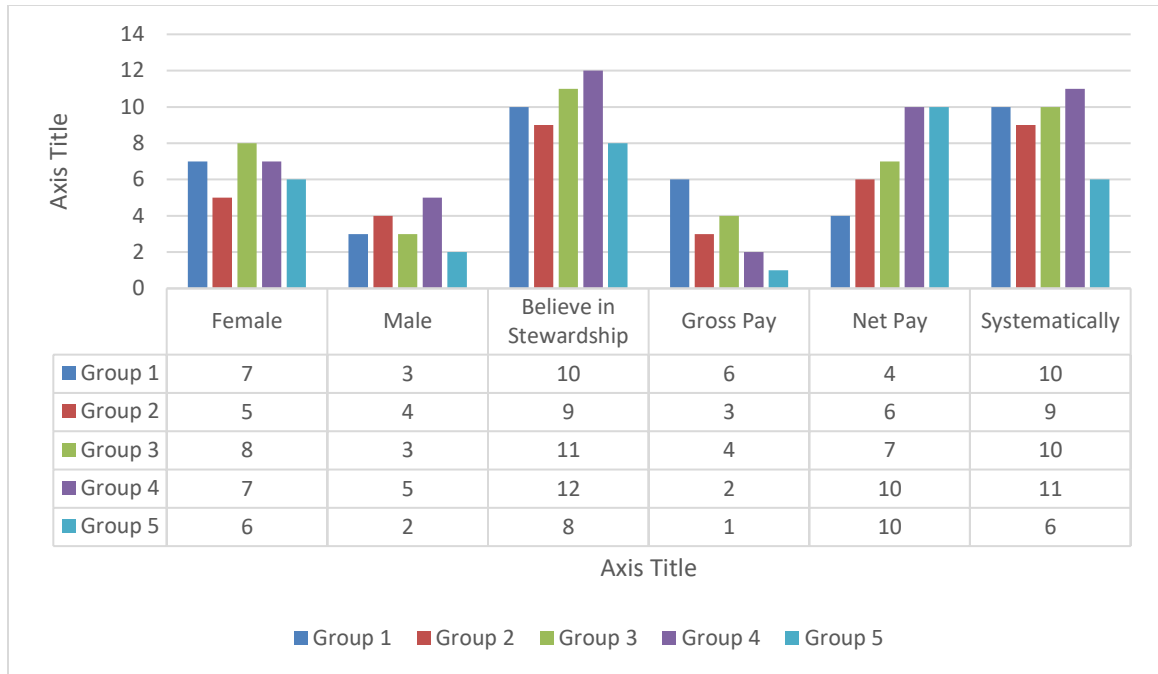


Figure 9. A comparison of the five groups.

The groups had a lot of similarities such as having more females than males; they all believed in stewardship, and in all the groups, some individuals returned tithe from the net rather than the gross. There were 33 females in the study and 17 males. All the participants in the study believed in the practice of stewardship. Sixteen of the 50 participants believed that tithe should be returned from gross income, while 34 of the individuals returned tithe from the net.

Participants' Responses

One of the participants said she had been an Adventist all her life and she had come to realize that without peer groups, the church would never make progress. Peer groups are important because it allows us to fellowship, form a tighter bond, and understand the mission of the church. Some other members said they enjoyed the presentations which were helpful in explaining what evangelism is and how to implement

it. In summary, the whole congregation was excited about participating and felt the church was moving in the right direction.

Evaluation/Overall Impression

As mentioned in Chapter 4, Canarsie, Mill Basin, East Flatbush, Flatbush, and Crown Heights have a great concentration of the West Indian community such as Jamaicans, Haitians, and Guyanese. Through social media, our focus audience is New York City and Long Island. We were more focused on Brooklyn and Canarsie because Shiloh Bilingual is in Canarsie. Our social media engagement in the church neighborhood has increased. We are partnered with churches, organizations, and individuals that wanted to be part of our programs via social media or in person. The personal ministry profile was increasing on social media, and we nurtured “digital evangelism” in Shiloh Bilingual. After the implementation, the group displayed their belief in stewardship but agreed that education must take place so that the practice of stewardship is done correctly.

Summary

This chapter is a result of the challenging work that I did. It took about a year to complete the work and 25 weeks to work with the small groups. This project required time, energy, and patience with the small groups. A mission-focused mindfulness movement was one of the first steps I took in this chapter after setting up the sounding board. In order to get better results, I needed to raise mission-focused stewardship awareness among the members of Shiloh Bilingual French. I utilized NCD, a questionnaire, and interviews to get everyone on board. The results were amazing; the

members participated and expressed their feelings. We discussed empowering leadership, holistic small groups, and loving relationships, and identified our resources and partners. We also reported how some seminars were presented and how people responded. An analysis of small-group attendees was reported in different figures. The small groups worked on three objectives: feeding, training, and sending. We fed them spiritually, we trained and equipped them, and we sent them to make disciples. Thus, I am concluding this chapter with my personal impression.

My Personal Impression

I was fascinated by the results at the end of the project. I realize that working with different groups of people made the outcome even greater. I was proficient in encouraging and supporting board members and leaders in achieving the goals they had set by clearly articulating the path to reach the desired outcome. I was able to accomplish this reassuring, directive, or participative leadership through the help of the Holy Spirit and the support of my congregation. I was able to practice one of my dominant skills which is active listening. I listened openly and encouraged feedback while creating and maintaining an inclusive environment. This study is the reason for an increase in tithe and a great motivation for evangelism.

My overall impression is that we need a way for all the age groups, 16 and up, to work together. The next phase would be to mix the different age groups together and see how well they work together. I set a high standard for integrity and respect, and it was consistently viewed as objective and fair. My understanding was evident in the way in which I could have genuine and empathetic engagement with the sounding board, the church board members, the leaders, and the participants. I could reflect feelings of the

communicator (the participant speaking). This method of active listening established an emotional rapport between the communicator and me. For me to move to the level of mastery in active listening, I needed to establish a rapport between the speaker and me through reflected meaning. This allowed me to focus on the factual message of the speaker instead of an emotional communication.

In order to get a better result, I had to address the stewardship problems in a spirit of positive confrontation. I had to challenge the status quo to bring change and to use the resources that I had at my disposal. I had to bring innovation that could mobilize, motivate, and establish clear direction and vision. To be a transformational leader, one must advocate and orchestrate bold moves.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION

To arrive at a higher level of accuracy in this research, I used several tools to help assist in this experience. I could not ignore the importance of those tools and their possible weaknesses as we strove to demonstrate a comprehensive view of each. My passion and vision were to achieve the goals in perspective. However, I cannot ignore the possibility of overlooking some pertinent information, so I wanted to exhaust every avenue to attain the highest height possible.

Method of Evaluation

For this project, I used a mixed-method approach that included quantitative and qualitative techniques, also called triangulation. For the quantitative method, 30 participants volunteered to take the NCD survey. All the participants were members of Shiloh Bilingual French SDA in Canarsie, Brooklyn, New York. We chose to use only members of one church so that the results could reflect the church's status and beliefs. We also chose individuals from different age brackets. For the qualitative method, interviews were conducted with five groups. The results of the five groups are found in the figures in chapter 5.

Observations on Learning

We learned that the “empowering leadership” score was very low for the church.

They scored 39 for holistic small groups and 52 for loving relationships. Improving these scores will revitalize the church. In chapter 5, we developed the three elements where the church scored low. We need to empower our leaders so they will not get discouraged and give them resources to prepare other leaders. The church reached a moment where it plateaued and everyone was looking at each other. The study gave them a boost. Loving relationship and small groups work together. In the small group, the individual learned how to get acquainted, love one another, and share experiences and testimonies. This is the base of the church.

Identifying resources and partners is vital to the success of any campaign or project. When resources cannot be identified, it is like owning a vehicle but not knowing how to drive. One thing that is important is to find everyone's talents and occupations. By using individual talents and God-given gifts, it is possible to place everyone in the different departments to serve the church. We can also utilize organizations or people outside the church to aid us in completing the gospel mission. For example, food pantries, job agencies, and local newspapers can be used to share our vision with the community.

One-on-one conversation is essential. Many times, the real picture cannot be seen in a large group, but when we talk to individuals one to one, the vision becomes clear. A pastor's work is successful with visitation. Without visitation, there is no personal contact. The best way to build a relationship and trust is through one-on-one conversations. The individual starts to feel comfortable and treats you like a member of the family.

From the study, we concluded that more people need to be educated on stewardship and the method of practicing it. Stewardship has become a subject of taboo.

Many people do not want to talk or hear about stewardship. Once they hear the word stewardship, they think “money,” and in this society money is never enough. Some individuals have more than one job and work all types of shifts, yet the money is still not enough. This is where we educate about faith and the reason for our existence on this earth. They must know that they are voyagers on this earth with a mission and everything we do on this earth is for a greater goal of reaching the Promised Land. The only way to achieve this is to put God first in all that we do.

Do not set up too many goals; have only a few measurable and realistic goals. One thing that paralyzes the church is when we have too many goals, not one central goal in common. The goal should not be vague but clear.

We learned that involving the youth in the program was essential because the youth are creative, fast, innovative, and dynamic. The youth have a lot of potential. They should be integrated in all the different church departments because they are the church of today and tomorrow. The youth display vitality.

The status quo and traditions need to be challenged. There has always been a debate between the new and old generations. Through this project, we learned that different generations can work together and that it is a matter of understanding each other.

Recommendations

The following are the recommendations from this study:

1. Address the belief that stewardship is only about money. Until now, many church members have been reluctant when it came to stewardship. They were encouraged to participate in every revival except a stewardship-focused revival. It is very necessary

to have a movement to change the face of stewardship. Promote the true meaning of stewardship and the stewardship of members.

2. Develop an app that is more relevant to young people/social media. I highly admire the Adventist online giving app but I feel that it does not really connect with our young people. Use relevant platforms to connect with them.

3. Use another term for stewardship. A great way to revamp stewardship and make it likable is to create new terms for stewardship. For example, in French it is called “Gestion Chretienne de la Vie” (Christian life management or managing life in a Christian way).

4. Promote a stewardship plan in the church and evaluation method. Whenever the church conducts business meeting, the stewardship plan should be revised and re-evaluated so that the church can be keep on track. The plan should not simply be a tradition. The plan should be well thought out, new, and innovative so the church does not get used to it and plateau instead of moving forward.

5. Involve young people in the stewardship plan or activities of the church. Our young people are very intelligent and are doing very well in their schooling and careers, but when they are in church, they are never considered to have enough maturity. Some of our young people are running big companies. We can use their potential in church while we educate them on what stewardship really is. If we do not teach them, there will be no one to replace us and mission-focused stewardship will die.

6. Promote wholistic small groups. When small groups are not being utilized in a church, the members create their own cliques in a bad way. These cliques can be very fatal for the church. When we also have small groups that are not functional, the church

becomes paralyzed. The fundamental base of progress of a church is small groups. If we want progress in mission, evangelism, stewardship, personal spiritual growth, and financial growth, small group is the key.

This has truly been a blessing for me. After the whole project has been analyzed, I can truly say that it was a privilege to experience this. I humbly present this document to anyone who is searching for a mission-focused stewardship plan. This is my contribution to the stewardship field.

APPENDIX A

SURVEY ON CHRISTIAN STEWARDSHIP

- 1) - What is your gender?
a) masculine b) feminine
- 2) - What age group are you in?
8-22 years 23-37 years 38-52 years 53-67 years 68 years and over
- 3) - Are you a baptized member of the Seventh-day Adventist Church?
Yes No
- 4) - Do you believe that you should support the work of God with your tithes and your offerings?
Yes No
- 5) - What are the sources of your income?
a) Work b) Disability c) Social security d) Pension e) Others
- 6) - If (e) is part of your choice, indicate the nature of these sources.
.....
- 7) - What is your monthly salary bracket?
\$1-1000; \$1001-2000; \$2001-3000; \$3001-4000; \$4001 and +
- 8) - Do you return to the house of the treasury the dime of each income?
Yes No
- 9) - Do you return the tithes from the net pay or from the gross pay?
a) from net pay b) from gross pay
- 10) - Do you want to increase the number of Christian stewards?
a) yes b) no c) not yet
- 11) - If so, when you were not yet a Christian steward did you know how to make offerings to the treasury house on every salary?
a) yes b) no
- 12) - If yes, on what basis did you know how to make the offerings to the house of the treasure?
a) vaguely b) systematic
- 13) - Now that you are a Christian manager, how are you going to make your offerings?
a) vaguely b) systematic
- 14) - If you have chosen to make the offerings systematically, what percentage will you adopt?
3%; 4%; 5%; 6%; 7%; 8%; 9%; 10%; more

15) - If you had already entered into Christian management at a certain percentage in terms of offerings, will you keep the same percentage, or will you increase it?
a) The same percentage b) a higher percentage

16) - If you plan to adopt a higher percentage in your offerings, what will the new percentage be?
.....%

17) - How much was the previous percentage?
.....%

18) - I have not yet enrolled in Christian management; but I have decided to faithfully return my dime and make higher-than-prior offerings to the treasury house.
a) certainly b) not at all

19) - I have decided to make the Lord my partner because he is in turn my Creator, my Owner, my Support, and my Redeemer.
a) yes b) no c) not yet

20) - I recognize that everything I have comes from God. With what he has put in my hands I am voluntarily choosing to advance his work on earth.
a) yes b) no

21)- Comments
(optional)

APPENDIX B

LETTER OF INFORMED CONSENT



Shiloh Bilingual Seventh-day Adventist Church
Shiloh Bilingue, Église Adventiste du Septième Jour

1146 East 92nd Street
Brooklyn, NY 11236
Pastor Herod J. Thomas
(212) 303-4067
Shilohbilingual@gmail.com

Andrews University

INFORMED CONSENT FORM

I am conducting a research study for my Doctor of Ministry at Andrews University, Berrien Springs, Michigan. Your participation in this study is greatly appreciated.

Title:

Mission Focused Stewardship

Purpose of Study:

The task of this project is to develop, implement, and evaluate a mission focused stewardship plan for Shiloh Bilingual French and Siloé French Seventh-day Adventist Churches. The analysis of this data will allow the researcher to find valuable insights that can be used to enhance the researcher's church growth strategies.

Risks:

We believe there are no known risks associated with participating in this research study.

Voluntary Participation:

You are invited to participate in a research study entitled Mission Focused Stewardship. Pastor Herode Jean-Vilien Thomas is conducting this study. Participation involves collecting, analyzing and interpreting quantitative and qualitative research through the NCD Initiative survey. Through a catalog of closed-ended and open-ended questionnaires, and interviews members will properly identify their talents and employ their spiritual gifts to the ministry in order to fulfill their role in carrying out the mission of the church.

Expected Duration:

Estimated duration of participation in this survey may range from 18-30 minutes.

Procedure:

First step in the process - participants will receive an online survey invitation.

Second step - Survey results will be produced once participant's results are received.

Third step - Based on survey results, action plans will be developed that will bring about progress.

Final step - Once signs of progress have been visible, survey will be repeated.

Benefit:

There will be no direct benefit to you for your participation in this survey. However, we hope that information learned from this study may contribute to personal spiritual growth.



Shiloh Bilingual Seventh-day Adventist Church
Shiloh Bilingue, Église Adventiste du Septième Jour

1146 East 92nd Street
Brooklyn, NY 11236
Pastor Herod J. Thomas
(215) 303-4067
Shilohbilingual@gmail.com

Confidentiality:

The information you provide will be kept strictly confidential. Your identity in this study will not be disclosed. Every effort will be made by the researcher to preserve your confidentiality. No names will be included or published in any report. Data files will be stored in a secured location accessed only by authorized researchers.

Contact Information:

If you have questions about your rights as a participant in this research, or if you desire additional information, you may contact the researcher Pastor Herode Jean-Vilien Thomas at waherode86@gmail.com or (215) 303-4067. My advisor can be reached at 516-427-0872. You may also contact the Andrews University IRB Office at (269) 471-6361 or irb@andrews.edu

Your participation in this research is completely voluntary, and you will not be penalized if you refuse to participate or decide to stop. You may refuse to take part in the research or exit the survey at any time without penalty. There will be no coercion or undue influence on research participants to take part. If you agree to participate, you must be given a signed copy of this document. Signing this document means that the research study, including the above information, has been described to you orally, and that you voluntarily agree to participate.

Signature of Participant

Date

Investigator's signature

Date

REFERENCE LIST

REFERENCE LIST

- Allen, R. M. (2010). *Reformed theology*. Edinburgh, Scotland: A & C Black.
- Atlantic Union Conference. (n.d.a). About us: Mission and history [Webpage]. Retrieved from <https://atlantic-union.org/about-us/mission-and-history/>
- Atlantic Union Conference. (n.d.b). Ministries: Stewardship [Webpage]. Retrieved from <https://atlantic-union.org/ministries/stewardship/>
- Bain, R. (2014) *Building authentic community through small group ministry among young adults of select churches within the Greater New York Conference*. Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University.
- Baqai, H. R. (2018). *Servant leadership and job satisfaction in k-12 schools: A systematic review* (Unpublished doctoral dissertation). University of Maryland-University College, Adelphi, MD.
- Berry, R. J. (2006). *Environmental stewardship: Critical perspectives—past and present*. London, England: T&T Clark.
- Brown, K., & Cullen, C. (2006). Maslow's hierarchy of needs used to measure motivation for religious behavior. *Mental Health, Religion & Culture*, 9(1), 99–108.
- Burrill, R. (2009). *How to grow an Adventist church: Fulfilling the mission of Jesus*. Los Angeles, CA: Hart.
- Burrill, R., & Evans, T. L. (2014). *Creating healthy Adventist churches through natural church development*. Berrien Springs, MI: North American Division Evangelism Institute.
- Cahill, T. (2010). *The gifts of the Jews: How a tribe of desert nomads changed the way everyone thinks and feels*. New York, NY: Knopf Doubleday.
- Carter, W. H., & Porter, L. (2017). *Turning points in the history of American evangelicalism*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans.
- Chandler, D. J. (2016). *The Holy Spirit and Christian formation: Interdisciplinary perspectives*. New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan.

- Cagle, C. J. (2017, March 1). Church fathers, catechisms, and retirement stewardship. *Retirement Stewardship*. Retrieved from <https://www.retirementstewardship.com/2017/03/01/church-fathers-catechisms-and-retirement-stewardship/>
- Collins, P. M., & Fahey, M. A. (2008). *Receiving the nature and mission of the church: Ecclesial reality and ecumenical horizons for the twenty-first century*. New York, NY: T&T Clark.
- Conder, T. (2006). *The church in transition: The journey of existing churches into the emerging culture*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.
- Danilchick, P. M. (2016). *Thy will be done strategic leadership, planning and management for Christians*. Yonkers, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary.
- Dorr, D. R., Hawthorne, S. C., & Winter, R. D. (1999). *Perspectives on the worlds Christian movement*. Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library.
- Dudley, R., & Gruesbeck, C. (2015, December 2). Planting new churches: Why it is so important. NAD, Institute of Christian Ministry. Retrieved from <https://circle.adventist.org/files/icm/nadresearch/Plantingnewchurches.pdf>
- Egli, J., & Marable, D. (2011). *Small groups: Big impact*. Apple Valley, MN: ChurchSmart Resources.
- Ehrman, B. D. (2005). *Lost christianities: The battles for scripture and the faiths we never knew*. Oxford, MI: Oxford University.
- Erner, G. (2005, November 4). Christian economic morality: The medieval turning point. *International Social Science Journal*, 57(185), 469–479. Retrieved from <https://doi-org.i.ezproxy.nypl.org/10.1111/j.1468-2451.2005.564.x>
- Fitzgerald, V. (2007, January). The economics of liberation theology. ResearchGate. Retrieved from https://www.researchgate.net/publication/292039446_The_economics_of_liberation_theology
- Folmer, F. (2014, February 11). The Postmodern Gospel: A theologian uses two exemplars of postmodernity to argue against capitalism. *The Revealer*. Retrieved from <https://therevealer.org/the-postmodern-gospel/>
- Fredriksen, P. (2008). *From Jesus to Christ: The origins of the New Testament images of Jesus*. New Haven: Yale University Press.
- Furstenberg, Y. (2020). Jesus against the laws of the Pharisees: The legal woe sayings and Second Temple intersectorian discourse. *Journal of Biblical Literature*, 139(4), 769–788. Retrieved from <https://doi-org.i.ezproxy.nypl.org/10.1353/jbl.2020.0044>

- Garrison, D. (2013). *Evangelism is just one beggar telling another beggar where to find bread*. Retrieved from <https://dallasgarrison.wordpress.com/2013/03/26/evangelism-is-just-one-beggar-telling-another-beggar-where-to-find-bread/>
- Gelder, C. V. (2007). *The missional church in context: Helping congregations develop contextual ministry*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans.
- General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists. (n.d.). Mission statement of the Seventh-day Adventist Church: Our mission [Webpage]. Retrieved from <https://www.adventist.org/official-statements/mission-statement-of-the-seventh-day-adventist-church/?searchsite=www.adventist.org&ref=on-site-search&searchterm=mission+statement>
- General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, Office of Archives and Statistics. (1987). *1987 Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook*. Silver Spring, MD: General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists.
- General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, Office of Archives and Statistics. (1990). *1990 Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook*. Silver Spring, MD: General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists.
- General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, Office of Archives and Statistics. (2005). *2005 Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook*. Silver Spring, MD: General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists.
- General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, Office of Archives and Statistics. (2011). *2011 Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook*. Silver Spring, MD: General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists.
- General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, Office of Archives and Statistics. (2016). *2016 Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook*. Silver Spring, MD: General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists.
- Gibbs, E., & Bolger, R. K. (2008). *Emerging churches: Creating Christian community in post-modern cultures*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker.
- Gotsis, G., & Merianos, G. (2012). Early Christian representations of the economy: Evidence from New Testament texts. *History & Anthropology*, 23(4), 467–505. Retrieved from <https://doi-org.i.ezproxy.nypl.org/10.1080/02757206.2013.726715>
- Greater New York Conference. (2018). Mission and Strategic Objectives 2019-2022 [Webpage]. Retrieved from <https://www.gnyc.org/administration/mission-and-strategic-objectives-2019-2022>

- Green, E. (2016, August 23). It's hard to go to church. *The Atlantic*. Retrieved from <https://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2016/08/religious-participation-survey/496940/>
- Hattie, J., & Timperley, H. (2007, March). The power of feedback. *Review of Educational Research*, 77(1), 81–112.
- Herrington, J., Bonem, M., & Furr, J. H. (2000). *Leading congregational change: A practical guide for the transformational journey*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Izuzquiza, D. (2009). *Rooted in Jesus Christ: Toward a radical ecclesiology*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans.
- James, P. D. (1999). *The acts of the apostles*. Edinburgh, Scotland: Canongate Books.
- Jena, P. C. (2003). *Masters or stewards: A theological reflection on ecology and environment*. Nagpur, India: ISPCK.
- Johnson, E. A. (2002). *The church women want: Catholic women in dialogue*. New York, NY: Herder & Herder.
- Johnson, P. (1976). *History of Christianity*. New York, NY: Touchstone.
- Kochupurackal, S. (2007). *Eco-mission: A paradigm shift in missiology*. Bangalore, India: Asian Trading.
- Kureethadam, J. I. (2014). *Creation in crisis: Science, ethics, theology*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis.
- Maier, P. L. (2007). *Eusebius: The church history*. Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Academic.
- Martin-Schramm, J. B., & Stivers, R. L. (2003). *Christian environmental ethics: A case approach*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis.
- Maslow, A. H. (1954). *Motivation and personality*. New York: Harper & Row.
- Maxson, B. C., & Lézeau, J.-L. (2006). *Strategic church finances: A biblical approach*. Silver Spring, MD: General Conference Stewardship Department.
- McLeod, S. (2022). Maslow's hierarchy of needs. *Simply Psychology* [Website]. Retrieved from <https://www.simplypsychology.org/maslow.html>
- Meeks, M. D. (2007). *Our calling to fulfill: Wesleyan views of the church in mission*. Nashville, TN: Kingswood.

- Middleton, F. (2019, July 3). *Reliability vs validity: What's the difference?* Retrieved from <https://www.scribbr.com/methodology/reliability-vs-validity/>
- Milne, N. (2014, June 8) The love of money and the sin of Valens in Polycarp's Epistle to the Philippians. Reformed For His Glory. Retrieved from https://reformedforhisglory.wordpress.com/2014/06/08/the-love-of-money-and-the-sin-of-valens-in-polycarps-epistle-to-the-philippians/#_ftn38
- Naledi, H. (2022). Mitchelton Seventh-day Adventist Church. Retrieved from http://am-simplesite.s3.amazonaws.com/assets/pro/724/u-217161177-654ba0c80010ac5bf19346e3b95a723b/Mitchelton_Bulletin_19_February_2022.pdf
- Natural Church Development. (n.d.). About natural church development (NCD). Retrieved from http://www.ncd-international.org/public/natural_church_development.html
- Niebuhr, H. R. (2008). *The responsibility of the church for society*. Louisville: Westminster, John Knox Press.
- North American Division of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. (n.d.). Hope and wholeness: Mission [Webpage]. Retrieved from <https://www.nadadventist.org/hope-and-wholeness>
- Oden, P. (2015). *The transformative church: New ecclesial models and the theology of Jurgen Moltmann*. Minneapolis, MN: Fortress.
- Park, J. S. (2007). *Missional ecclesiologies in creative tension*. New York, NY: International Academic.
- Payne, J. D. (2008). *Missional house churches: Reaching our communities with the gospel*. Colorado Springs, CO: Pasternoster.
- Percy, M. (2010). *Shaping the church: The promise of implicit theology*. Surrey, England: Ashgate.
- Peterson, C. M. (2013). *Who is the church? An ecclesiology for the twenty-first century*. Minneapolis, MN: Fortress.
- Powell, K. (2016) *Growing young: Six essential strategies to help young people discover and love your church*. Grand Rapids: Baberbooks.
- Pritz, R. (1988). *Nazarene Jewish Christianity: From the end of the New Testament images of Jesus*. Skokie, IL: Brill Archive.
- Radner, E. (1998). *The end of the church: A pneumatology of Christian division in the west*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans.

- Reddy, M. M. (2019). Organizational communication: Types of communication used by the Seventh-Day Adventist Church in spreading Christianity. *Gender and Behaviour*, 17(1), 12674–12695.
- Robbins, D. A. (1990). *The tithe belongs to the Lord*. Grass Valley, CA: Victorious.
- Rosario, M. A. (2014). *Urban evangelism: Biblical-sociological principles to reach the cities*. Charleston, SC: Create Space.
- Roxburgh, A. J., & Romanuk, F. (2006). *The missional leader: Equipping your church to reach a changing world*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Rumley, D. D. (2011). *Perceptions of the senior pastors' transformational leadership style and its relationship to the eight markers of Natural Church Development* (Doctoral dissertation). ProQuest Dissertations and Theses database. (UMI Number: 3477630)
- Sadri, G., & Clarke, B. R. (2011, October). Meeting employee requirements: Maslow's hierarchy of needs is still a reliable guide to motivating staff. *Industrial Engineer*, 43(10), 44–48.
- Scaria, A. M. (2006). *The unknown face of the church: Unveiling the hidden secrets*. Delhi, India: Media House.
- Searcy, N., & Thomas, K. (2008). *Activate: An entirely new approach to small groups*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker.
- Shiloh Bilingual French SDA Church. (2019). *Church Board minutes*. Author.
- Stetzer, E. D. (2006). *Planting missional churches*. Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman.
- Stetzer, E., & Geiger, E. (2014). *Transformational groups: Creating a new scorecard for groups*. Nashville, TN: B&H.
- Sullivan, E. (2016). Self-actualization. In *Britannica* [Online edition]. Retrieved from <https://www.britannica.com/science/self-actualization>
- Thayer, J. (2010, April). Pastors' perspectives on assimilating new members - Part 2. *Ministry Magazine*, 82(4), 11–13. Retrieved from <https://cdn.ministrymagazine.org/issues/2010/issues/MIN2010-04.pdf>
- Tizon, A. (2016, February). Preaching for whole life stewardship. Challenging the global dream. *Asian Journal of Pentecostal Studies*, 19(1), 3–15.

- Verdejo, M. (2021). Behavioral manifestation: Spiritual stewardship in selected elementary public schools. Available at SSRN: https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=3789553
- White, E. G. (1902). *Testimonies for the church* (Vol. 7). Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press.
- White, E. G. (1909). *Testimonies for the church* (Vol. 9). Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press.
- White, E. G. (1917). *Prophets and kings*. Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press.
- White, E. G. (1946). *Evangelism*. Washington, DC: Review & Herald.
- White, E. G. (2000). *Counsels on stewardship*. Hagerstown, MD: Review & Herald.
- White, E. G. (2012). *Ministry to the cities*. Miami, FL: IADPA.
- Williamson, C. M., & Allen, R. J. (1998). *The vital church: Teaching, worship, community, service*. St. Louis, MO: Chalice.
- Wittberg, P. S. C. (2012). *Building strong church communities: A sociological overview*. Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press.
- World Population Review. (2021). *Brooklyn population 2021*. Retrieved from <https://worldpopulationreview.com/boroughs/brooklyn-population>
- World Population Review. (2022). *Brooklyn population 2022*. Retrieved from <https://worldpopulationreview.com/boroughs/brooklyn-population>

CURRICULUM VITA

CURRICULUM VITA

Name: Hérode Jean-Vilien Thomas
Birthdate: August 15, 1981
Family: wife: Peggy Dufresne; children: Phoebe Wilhermine, Goel Jean-Vilien, and Khahyil Francina

Education:

2017-Present	Doctor of Ministry (Emphasis: Leading for Growth and Church Multiplication), Andrews University Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary
2013-2016	Masters of Divinity, New York Theological Seminary
2014-2019	5 Units of Clinical Pastoral Education/Residency, St John's Episcopal Hospital
2009-Pending	MA in Education, Montemorelos University
2001-2007	BA in Theology, Adventist University of Haiti

Experience:

2019-Present	Pastor of Shiloh Bilingual and Siloe French Seventh-day Adventist Churches (Greater New York Conference)
2018-2019	Pastor of Peniel French and Bethsaida French Seventh-day Adventist Churches (Greater New York Conference)
2015-2018	Pastor of Canaan, Peniel and Shirley French Seventh-day Adventist Churches (Greater New York Conference)
2012-2014	Volunteer Pastor of Sion French Seventh-day Adventist Church (Greater New York Conference)
2008-2010	District Pastor of Saint-Raphael Seventh-day Adventist Churches (Northern Conference of Seventh day Adventists, Haiti)
2006-2008	District Pastor of Cerca Carvajal, SDA Churches (Northern Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, Haiti)
2005-2006	Associate Pastor of the Adventist Temples # I & # II, Cap-Haitian SDA Churches (Northern Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, Haiti)
2004-2005	Pastoral Internship at Jerusalem French SDA Church, Bizoton 53, Port au Prince, Haiti
2003-2005	Assistant Director of Information, Radio Esperance, Port au Prince, Haiti
2002-2005	Chaplain of Educative Renaissance Academy of Carrefour, Port au Prince, Haiti